HM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

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Fireflight
Children 18:3
Hawk Nelson
Shiny Toy Guns
P.O.D. [Poster]
Burden Of A Day
As I Lay Dying Tour Review

THE MYRIAD

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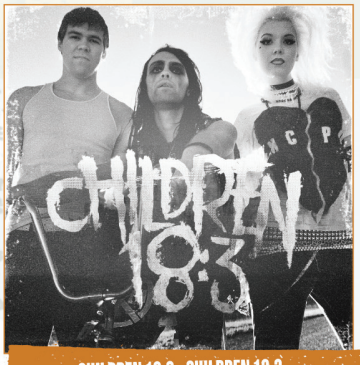

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

PROPHET DOUG ... DOUG THE PROPHET

That's kind of a cool moniker, but I'm not sure I want it. Sometimes, when I think of prophecy, I think of predicting future events, like the apocalypse; and other times I think about the time that people asked Christ to use the "gift" of prophesy. The phrase, "Prophesy! Who hit you?" was hurled as a mockery and insult by the Roman soldiers who were hitting Jesus the Creator of all things in the face, spitting at Him. I'm amazed at the restraint He showed to those soldiers amidst their brutality. He obviously didn't take it personal. He must've been pretty focused on His goal and mission – which was death on a cross. I guess the worst hadn't yet come at that point. I just can't even fathom that kind of restraint. I imagine myself fighting back like an action movie hero. I can only too easily picture myself getting angry at those guys and vanquishing them out of sheer vengeance. It's easy to see how I fail to qualify for the role of Messiah (and God save anyone whom I try to be a messiah for!). Anyway, I've already travelled a long way away from my original point, which is this: being a prophet isn't an easy thing or something I would rashly aspire to. But it would be cool if people saw The Myriad on the cover of this issue and thought, 'How cool is it that they put this band on the cover before they completely blew up?!' The truth is, I wanted to have this issue come out around the same time their album did. I like the idea of someone picking up an issue with a certain band on the cover and buying that band's new album ... both on the same day. The "problem" with this particular album, though, was that it kept getting delayed and delayed again when cool things like this MTV/Mountain Dew contest crowned them a winner. Right at deadline their label turned in an updated ad that featured a new (hopefully solid) April 29 release date. I hate it when that happens ... but good things *do* come to those that wait.

So much else to say, so little space. You should read my blog. I post almost everyday. As this issue goes to the printer, Lord willing, we'll be in Uganda, Africa, seeing the work Compassion International does up close. I'll be blogging about it. Come check it out.

Grace and Peace

SPINNING AT HM NOW

FORT PASTOR	*Beautiful Imperfection*	Light, organic cCm rock.
VARIOUS ARTISTS	*Israel Unleashed*	Crazy rock and metal compilation from Israel.
VARIOUS ARTISTS	*Hearts Bleed Passion, V3*	Another cool comp with tons of up-comers.
THE OAKS	*Songs For Waiting*	Partly inspired by Dietrich Bonheoffer.
SHINY TOY GUNS	*We Are Pilots*	Infectious and fun. One f-bomb in "Le Disko."
IDIOT PILOT	*Wolves*	So secular. So hot. Ouch! (a funny, okay?)
HAPPY ANARCHY	*Reset*	Unsure. Spree-ish fun, rollicking all over.

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Letters to the Edit

THE PRINTS OF PEACE

You are seeing 6 year old Talen (T), 11 year old Grayson and Jim in all of his glory! Thank you for making the moshing angel print for us. We are very grateful! We LOVE the print and it reminds us of our first commitment to the Lord when we see it. My guys have also been wearing their worship at full volume t's and people stop us everywhere wanting to know more about them. Cool campaign.
–Christa Niven, via internet

Ed – Glad you like the special order print. I've got one hanging in my office.

ONCE NOTHING

Have you heard the new Once Nothing album, *First Came The Law*? It's awesome blue collar metal on the Solidstate label. I would like to see these guys make the cover of your HM Magazine.
–Brian Loftus, via internet

Ed – Yes. I like it a lot, esp. "The Dust of a Town."

MONITOR YOUR WEBSITE!

I think you guys should monitor the comments on your HM site I have been seeing a lot of nasty stuff on there. Just wanted to let you guys know. Take care and God bless you guys.
–Brian Ghelarducci, via internet

Ed – Those dumb spam spybots! They're worse than pigeons in the park. I delete their messes as soon as I see 'em.

WE'RE MONITORING YOU

I noticed the cover design change of HM the moment I took the new issue from my mail slot. I like it a lot. While I have nothing against the "red stripe" design, the new design has a more contemporary feeling. I enjoyed the Thrice article, as well as the Korn interview. The Pillar poster was really nice, also. Was it taken inside an airplane? Thank you for the Glass Hammer review. I'd love to see an article on or an interview with this band. I always check out bands that you cover or advertise which interest me on MySpace. The band that I found the most interesting this time around was Syrens. I wouldn't mind seeing an article on or interview with them. Fearscape is great, too. Definitely a must-buy. These guys definitely deserve a cover story. Keep up the great work!
–Tom K., Manitowoc, WI

Ed – I could answer your question about the Pillar photo, but then I'd have to pull a future article on Glass Hammer... What's it gonna be?

MEGADETH SAYS

I just wanted to tell you guys what a great job you're doing out there on your mag. Getting your new issue is my favorite day every two months (I know, I have a pretty lame life). I have read your magazine cover to cover (usually 2 or 3 times) every issue since your black and white cover story on Sacred Warrior, back in the 90's. Anyway, keep it up. I noticed in your newest issue that Dave Mustane and Megadeth were in bold print in the news bullets section. I was wondering if they were Christians and I'm the only person around that didn't know that. How 'bout a Showbread cover issue when their double discs drop in the spring? God Bless.
–Brett Beauchamp, via internet

Ed – Maybe you should monitor your HM "says" interviews a little closer. Mustaine affirmed his faith in HM way back in 1997.

EVERYBODY'S GONZO

I was just curious if you ever did a 'what so and so says' with Ted Nugent. He used to live up here with me in Michigan, but now he lives down there with you in Texas. Anyway, he'd be an interesting guy to read about in that column. He holds a lot of Christian-type values yet he does a lot of things that most Christians would consider to be wrong. I've heard him speak about God in general, but never specifically about Jesus Christ. I'd be interested to read his opinions and answers to your questions about these things.
–Joshua Collins, via internet

Ed – Texas is a big state, so I haven't run into him yet, but that would be a very interesting interview. Through a publicist he agreed to do an interview with me for our 10th Anniversary issue, but for one reason or another that never happened. Maybe we could get Dog the Bounty Hunter to interview Ted Nugent. Now THAT would be a hum-dinger of an interview, huh?

HM

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SCRIPTURE "'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her... 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you... 'Then neither do I condemn you,'" Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'" (John 8:7-11)

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HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

THE BLACK NOISE PARTY BOYS
FROM THE ASHES OF MATERIA MEDICA

Good-time party band The Black Noise Party Boys have some great criticism for today's music: "There are thousands of 'heavy' bands in the punk/hardcore music scene today. Most of them are covered in eyeliner and screaming about their bleeding hearts or trying to rip off Botch's 'We Are the Romans' to no avail. Trendsetters seem to be a thing of the past and originality is all but gone." Utilizing guest vocalists like Dallas Taylor (on the song "A Pity Party") and A Plea For Purging's Andy Atkins (on "Going Away Party"), this band started two years after the demise of their previous incarnation – Materia Medica. Instead of struggling with music that so many didn't seem to get, they decided to have fun.

Look for their debut, *Party All The Time*, on Holdfast Records.

TRAA DANIELS BRANCHES OUT
LAUNCHES PRODUCTION COMPANY

Traa from POD has been extremely busy over the last year. He has finished the new P.O.D. CD titled *When Angels & Serpents Dance*, set to be released in April. However, when he wasn't busy with his band he was building Ryot Phoenix Music – a full service artist development company, but one that can run like a full service record label, that also consists of a music production department headed up by Traa. Traa has put together a dynamic team consisting of professionals that have worked with multi-platinum artists such as Brian McKnight, Alicia Keys, Rascal Flatts among others. The first two projects out on Ryot Phoenix are: Goodnight Goddess, whose debut CD is set to be released in June; and his own solo project, set to be available in March. Traa has also written a helpful book, *Insider's Secrets to Making it in the Music Business*.

Switchfoot frontman releases four solo EPs

Jon Foreman is returning to his indie-scene roots by releasing four solo EPs over the coming months. Individually titled *Fall*, *Winter*, *Spring*, and *Summer*, evoke vivid images of each season, making the collection a likely soundtrack to the year ahead. All four EPs will be released prior to the upcoming Switchfoot release in late 2008. "Because of the autobiographical nature of these songs, they became a self portrait that was far too personal for a band to release," says Foreman. "Tim, Chad and the rest of the band have been pushing me to get these types of songs out there for years. So I decided to let them go." According to Foreman the songwriting and production of these EPs were creatively intertwined. "Most of these songs were written and recorded the same night," said Foreman. "I would sing and play my guitar late at night until I got a take that captured what the song meant to me. From there I would add instruments to the vocal to see what would be appropriate. It was a very therapeutic, lonely, cleansing process."

News bullets

Emery announced their first U.S. headlining tour in two years, with Mayday Parade, **As Cities Burn**, Pierce the Veil and **Cry of the Afflicted**.

Dance Gavin Dance will tour with Poison The Well and The Locust.

12 Stones have a song on the *World's Strongest Man Soundtrack*.

August Burns Red joins the *Take Action Tour*, with Every Time I Die, From First To Last, The Bled, and The Human Abstract.

MxPx has a new video for the song "Shut It Down."

Anberlin just released a special collection of B-sides and rarities titled *Lost Songs*. The 19-song disc features rare and never-before-released material spanning the band's entire career with special acoustic versions, cover songs and B-sides. They recently shot a video for "The Unwinding Cable Car." The great Florida band plan to release their first release for Universal Republic Records in mid-year.

Faceless International (featured in the July/August issue's "To India With Love" article) is now carrying handmade Anberlin messenger bags made by their friends in Calcutta, India. They also have scarves designed by Showbread, belts and bracelets designed by **Classic Crime**, and bags designed by **Hundred Year Storm**.

Showbread is visiting the Casa De Fe orphanage in Shell, Ecuador this winter.

Anberlin's Stephen Christian invites anyone who wants to come on two missions trip to Guatemala this June. [facelessinternational.com]

And speaking of missions, Compassion International has asked a dozen bloggers to accompany them on a trip to Uganda to see their work there. One of the bloggers picked was HM's Doug Van Pelt. Much will be blogged about this February trip at hmmag.com

Memphis May Fire

BY SAM FARRIES

Memphis – a dirty Southern town plagued by racial division, political corruption, and the best bar-b-que on earth and, oh yeah – it's the home of the blues and the birthplace of rock 'n' roll. Memphis May Fire – a dirty band from Dallas, TX that can administer their own form of "shock and awe" through their channeled belief that louder is always better. So what does one have to do with the other? Nothing really, when looking at lists of band names, guitarist Kellen McGregor thought "Memphis just rolled off the tongue… just right." Since their inception in October of 2006, Memphis May Fire have gone from just another local Dallas band to the new kids on the block. The ride from obscurity to notoriety was short-lived due to the fact that their self-released EP was making such a buzz that labels couldn't ignore, including the coveted Trustkill records. After months of negotiations, MMF became the latest diamond on the Trustkill roster. Their five-song self-titled EP boosts a mix of muddy AC/DC guitars with hints of Southern Rock hospitality. "It was and wasn't on purpose. We knew what we wanted and just went for it," comments McGregor. If you're jumping to Maylene (And TSOD) like comparisons, hold your horses. While MMF push and pull from various genres, there is a screamo (some dude is crying cause I used the 's' word) undercurrent that can't be ignored. Call it what you will. However influenced the record might be, whatever category your quick to throw them to, MMF see themselves as more than your typical bloodlust band. "Everyone just wants to be angry and dark. We just want people to have a positive vibe about us. And be able to laugh at your selves." And live is the only way you're going to understand that as McGregor explains, "You can't get the full MMF feel until you've seen us live." Here is what you're in for at a MMF show: "A man who tames beasts, clothing coming off, guitar flippage, Link (guitarist/vocalist Kellen McGregor) bounding across the stage, and dancing like a maniac." It's this sort of showmanship that helped land them in Trustkill's sights. "We try to just make our live shows really entertaining so fans will buy merch and come back to the show next time we are in town." Look for the full-length due out this summer.

Connecticut's **Wrench In the Works** just signed to Facedown Records. They are currently finishing the writing for their debut that will be engineered and produced this spring by Mike Schleibaum of Darkest Hour for a summer release.

Kingston Falls just finished up a winter tour and are now recording at Foundation Studios with Joey Sturgis (Devil Wears Prada) for their Facedown debut titled, *Armada On Mercury*, which will be released on March 18.

After nearly nine years of being a band, **Seventh Star** is breaking up. "We feel it's our time to move on. The main reason is different levels of dedication within the members. We are no longer all on the same page with how much of our lives are to be spent on the band. Some are personal reasons, others not. We feel we would rather go out on top than to fizzle out. We've always tried to give 100% in what we do. We've never been about the status, popularity, money or whatever passing trend is going around. We strived to play the music we wanted to and never back down from our message to speak to the hardcore community about our Savior, Jesus Christ and God's Grace. We've sacrificed time, money, relationships and college all because we believed in this. Sometimes it's been trying, but (it's) always been where we wanted to be. At this point in time we can't give 100% to the band and we are called to other areas of our life."

The 10th annual Facedown Fest will take place on March 28 + 29, 2008 in Pomona, CA. Acts include: **War Of Ages**, **Impending Doom**, Seventh Star (final show ever), **Sleeping Giant**, **xDeathstarx**, **Inked In Blood**, **xLooking Forwardx**, **Means**, **A Plea For Purging**, Kingston Falls, **RemoveTheVeil**, Wrench In The Works and more.

Those that have been following the Eric Volz drama will be happy to hear he was released from Nicaraguan prison. [Friendsofericvolz.com]

HARDNEWS
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Gwen Stacy

BY NATHAN DOYLE

Gwen Stacy is the band that every musician wants to grow up to be. Since their founding in 2004 the Indiana hardcore act has created an immense following throughout the Midwest, toured with some of their best friends, and found a manager in one of their musical idols. The band's drive and ability recently caught the eye of metal and hardcore staple, Ferret Records in October of 2007, and the label was quick to push the release of the band's debut album, *The Life I Know*.

"It's a huge thing. It's not something you see yourself doing in your wildest dreams; I never expected this to get here," commented bassist, Brent Schindler, "I'm getting told by people that they've seen advertisements for our record in magazines. That's something that I had never even thought would happen to someone like me, it's still a little overwhelming."

Gwen Stacy took two months out of their colossal touring schedule to put out what promises to be the first great hardcore album of the year. When asked about the album, Schindler added, "It's definitely a nerve racking thing, putting a lot of yourself into something like that. We spent a lot of nights working on that stuff. We actually went into studio and only had lyrics for half the songs, so basically we went in and we tossed around ideas and Cole took the reins and took what he wanted and wrote his own crap. It was rough. I'm not gonna lie; for a few days in studio we were panicked. We felt like people were expecting a lot, it was definitely a scary thought."

As a faith-based band on a clearly secular label, Gwen Stacy joins the ranks of bands like Maylene and the Sons of Disaster that are clearly "In the world, but not of it." Schindler explained, "There has been a lot of talk and discussion about doing certain things in the Christian market that we might not do in the secular market… I think it's really cool being a faith-based band on a secular label because it's not cliché'."

"It's definitely an underlying ministry at all times. We always say something from the stage and ask people to come and talk to us if they have questions about anything – whether it is life, faith, or macaroni and cheese. We really encourage people to come talk to us because we really want to be able to develop relationships. Developing relationships is definitely a big key in reaching people."

News bullets

Family Force 5 is touring with **Falling Up**, **Spoken**, and **This Beautiful Republic**.

Pillar was nominated for a Grammy® for "Best Rock or Rap Gospel Album" for *The Reckoning*. The band begins a 3-month headlining tour in February.

Skillet was nominated in the same Grammy category. The new deluxe edition of *Comatose* includes a new studio track, "Live Free or Let Me Die" and five acoustic tracks: "Rebirthing," "Yours to Hold," "The Older I Get," "Whispers In The Dark" and "Say Goodbye," plus three videos. The band will be part of the *Winter Jam Tour*, breaking in their new drummer, **Jen Ledger**.

Paramore received a Grammy nomination in the "Best New Artist" category. This news came just as *Riot!* has received RIAA gold certification for sales exceeding 500,000 units. After a New Year's Eve gig for MTV, the band headlines a UK tour. In March they begin a U.S. co-headlining tour with Jimmy Eat World.

As I Lay Dying received a Grammy Nomination for "Best Metal Performance" for the song "Nothing Left." **Tim Lambesis** confessed that, "I thought someone was pulling my leg when I first heard that we're nominated for a Grammy. I'm completely honored! Who would have thought you could play metal and still make your parents this proud? Now I'll have to go out and rent a tux to wear for the third time in my life. I knew I should have just bought one the first time…"

Ryan and **Don Clark** both got Grammy nominations for "Best Recording Package" for their work on **The Fold**'s *Secrets Make You Sick* album with their graphic design company Invisible Creature.

The packaging for *Hawk Nelson is My Friend* will include a board game for their fans.

Kurt Bachman of **Believer** reports that the classic metal thrashers will record new songs this winter.

mychildren mybride

BY NATHAN DOYLE

Fuelled by unadulterated hardcore and first person shooters, mychildren mybride has been kicking in teeth and "pwning n00bs" since 2004. These five Alabama boys craft a legitimate breed of metal around devastating breakdowns and are a breath of fresh air in a scene that is slowly suffocating from more of the same.

After three and a half years of relentless touring, there is no question that MCMB are some of the hardest working musicians in today's scene. Finally, after a brutal effort, Solid State finally took notice in October of 2007. You can expect MCMB's *Unbreakable* to hit shelves February 28.

Drummer Brian Hood shares his anticipation, "Everyone is excited to have a label to call home. We had toured for about three years with no label support, and I think everyone was starting to get a little burned out. We've been working on this album for the past two years, so needless to say, we are anxious to finally be able to release it. The fact that we are able to release it on a label that a lot of us have looked up to since we were in out early teens is definitely a blessing."

With *Unbreakable* MCMB aims to prove that everyone has to grow out of their girl pants at some point. Hood explains, "We all pretty much grew up and out of our 'scene kid' stages of life and started focusing more on the musical aspect of the band and less on fashion aspect of it. I think our new album will show how much we have matured as a band, as musicians, and as people."

It doesn't take much time to latch onto what the MCMB boys do in their spare time, "We are a hardcore influenced metal band that plays way too many video games… especially *Halo*, *Counterstrike 1.6* and *Call of Duty 4*." And Hood isn't kidding when he says "too many video games." The likes of the Master Chief and the Arbiter influence the band so much that they personally dedicated the song, "HEADSHOT!" to Bungie's galactic masterpiece. Hood encourages the band's audience, "Learn the words to the *Halo* song, "HEADSHOT!" and come have fun with us at the shows." Here's a little help, "I am the Master Chief, no one can mess with me. Saving the world from catastrophe, unstoppable's and killing sprees!"

Here I Come Falling was discovered by labelmates **The Devil Wears Prada**, who after seeing the band firsthand brought them to Rise Records. HICF is touring with other labelmates **Burden Of A Day** in February.

Gwen Stacy are heading out on tour with **Haste the Day**, Scary Kids Scaring Kids, and Drop Dead, Gorgeous.

Oh, Sleeper has announced a big US tour with good friends **Catherine** and **mychildren mybride**. The band just got off tour with **The Handshake Murders**, and they noticed a significant amount of fan participation; so much so, that one of their shows ended in injury, tells Ryan. "Things got really crazy at our show in Rhode Island, and Micah got his leg dislocated because so many kids jumped on top of him. We usually allow the crowd to come on stage during the gang chant part, and they all just piled on Micah. He tried to get up, but he wasn't able to walk, and two weeks later he still can't walk without crutches. We played a show after that happened and he just held onto the mic stand."

Project 86 released *The Kane Mutiny* EP on iTunes before Christmas. It features two new songs, a cover, and two remixes, the "Evil (A Chorus of Resistance)" music video, and a special digital booklet with lyrics handwritten by **Andrew Schwab**.

Quick and the Dead have broken up. **Shane Gould**, **Kerry Gould**, and **Bray Nelson** have decided to continue on and record an EP and then announce a new name (**Mendelson** is the early moniker of Shane Gould's new project).

Impending Doom have just announced a tour with Dead To Fall, Winds Of Plague and Belay My Last.

U2 3D is the name of the first live action movie ever shot, produced, and exhibited in digital 3-D. It was filmed during the **U2**'s *Vertigo Tour* dates in South America last year.

Luminate won the finals of "Band with a Mission" at Rocketown in Nashville.

HARDNEWS
Page sixteen

Enough Already!

BY JAMIE LEE RAKE

Praise & worship great for breakbeat samples? Yes, by **PSALM DRUMMERS**, led by **TERL BRYANT**. *Rhythms Of Fire* (One Voice/ Survivor U.K.) exudes Bryant's and friends' funky polyrhythms fit for happening dance floors, but a surfeit of the majestic reverence befitting Christ's adoration at lower tempos, too. A multi-culti, co-ed collection of Brit p&w leaders help with vocals. Deserving of domestic release; will it be? (TerlBryant.com, OneVoiceRecords.com)

Miss **ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT** during that hippie-ish, Christian-informed hip-hop troupe's 14 year absence. They're back! Be glad, as *Since The Last Time* (Vagabound) displays a return to their early wonderfulness. Rich organic instrumentation and turntablism mix with Scripture allusion and general positivity for a respite from both their genre's thug materialism and more overtly gospel rap. (ArrestedDevelopmentMusic.com)

Were Autumn Records' founders unaware of the same-named '60s San Fran' label responsible for introducing The Beau Brummels, et al? Regardless, the current Autumn has lately released two estimable guitar instrumental longplayers. Nash Vegas session cat/producer **TOM HEMBY** channels pleasantly rocking, semi-jazzy vibes into *Chasing The Wind*. Opting for a more whimsical, yet meditative approach, legendary **PHIL KEAGGY** references his own work and licks he lent to Keith Green on *The Song Within*. Both lovely in their own ways. (AutumnRecords.com)

Believe it: godly rocking began before the Jesus movement. *God In The Garage* (Gabriel's Trumpet, LP only) collects examples of same minus patchouli 'n' love beads. Orgeon's **CLICK KIDS** (*Christ Living In Christian Kids*) drip folk-pop innocence ala' male Shaggs to balance the manic psychedelic distortion wrought by Chileans **DELAL ALAMOS**. 'Tween those extremes lie the Roman Catholic-inspired *Misa A Go-Go Panamena* (Panamanian Go-Go Mass) from **CORO COLEGIO JAVIER** compiled here. Thank the band whose name you'll see in the following URL for rescuing these treasures: (MySpace.com/KnightsOfTheNewCrusade)

Can't condone her apparent theology, but there's no denying **AMI RUSHES**' soul gospel talent as exemplified to by her latest CD, *Lifting* (self-released). Among the current European-American blondes to embrace the genre, Rushes has cred' in having been in a choir directed by late (albeit controversial) James Cleveland and hiring Kurt Carr to produce her work. Musically dynamite, if doctrinally ... ehhh... (AmiRushes.com)

If it's saint-made music not covered in the rest of these pages, I may be up for covering it. Send it to: Jamie Lee Rake, P.O. Box 29 Waupun, WI 53963 USA. Until next time, later!

News bullets

Indianola Records has recently added the Miami Florida rock band **And Then There Was You** to its roster.

Kevin Max and **Stryper** will join Tesla, Aaron Lewis (Staind) and others, along with host Dee Snider, for the 5th Anniversary Station Family Fund Charity Concert in Providence, Rhode Island.

After a 15 year hiatus, **Flock 14** and **World Theatre** frontman **Tim McAllister** has released his first solo album, *Strong Tower*, and he's giving it away on his site [timmcallister.com]

Extreme are set to return in the spring with their first album of all new material in 13 years. The band features original members Nuno Bettencourt (guitar), Gary Cherone (vocals) and Pat Badger (bass), along with new drummer Kevin Figueiredo. The band plans a world tour this year to follow the release of their album, which is being produced by Bettencourt, who says: "It will have all the ingredients of an Extreme record. The music is always funkier than most rock bands – and born a bipolar bastard child of Mr. Zeppelin and Mrs. Beatles." A new generation of music fans are connecting with the band as a result of the inclusion of their song "Play With Me" on 2007's *Guitar Hero* video game.

Saving Grace has signed with Harvest Earth Records. *Behind Enemy Lines* should release in the spring. The band from New Zealand will be coming over to tour Canada/US in the spring/ summer.

The Militia Group just signed **We Shot The Moon**, which is the new project from **Jonathan Jones** (former singer of **Waking Ashland**).

Sioux City, Iowa band **For Today** just signed to Facedown Records.

Delirious? has a free download on their website of "God Is Smiling" from the upcoming album *Kingdom of Comfort*, which is due out in April.

LIVE REPORT

As I Lay Dying, August Burns Red, Evergreen Terrace, Still Remains

January 15

BY DOUG VAN PELT

AUSTIN, TX – The lineup for this tour had me salivating in anticipation ... and I wasn't the only one. It looked like a capacity crowd in the non-descript, high ceiling and concrete floor room of La Zona Rosa. The billing not only lived up to all the anticipation, but the metal-loving crowd took the excitement level up a few notches.

Still Remains stormed on and wasted little time in slamming their fast, heavy and melodic metal all over the audience. The first song, "To Live And Die By Fire," showed that this crowd was seemingly as much theirs as it was AILD's. The crowd knew the song from the *Of Love And Lunacy* album, singing along so well that frontman TJ Miller exclaimed, "This is great ... better than high school choir!" With only half an hour to audibly translate the Still Remains experience, the band ripped from one song to the next, with nary a rest in between and no getting lost in long, airy keyboard runs. The signature keyboard sound was there and it delivered their stratospheric accents, but this set was all about the heaviness. When the 7 songs were over, it didn't seem like anyone had been short-changed, either, as all the band members certainly put out, with drenched hair, face and garments to prove it. Overall, the material was fairly evenly distributed from last year's *The Serpent* and their first Road Runner release. They ran new tunes, like "...Wax Walls..." "Avalanche" and "Anemia in Your Sheets" in the middle, and ended with the older "The Worst Is Yet To Come."

Evergreen Terrace threw their hat in the ring, with a pummelling 30-minute set. Their merciless metal onslaught was so heavy, that it was impossible not to admire. **August Burns Red** had 45 minutes to show why they have a growing reputation for a fun and unrelenting live show. Their mixture of melodic guitar runs atop a super tight rhythm section and the well-timed black metal howl and shriek sounds huge in concert, showing that technicality and toughness go hand in hand. Vocalist Jake Luhrs is a great frontman, prowling all over the place, constantly inviting the audience to sing along, as well as leaving small little visual moments to remember, like letting the microphone swing like a pendulum from his hand between verses. Many a local stage diver was able to bathe in their milli-seconds of attention at center stage alongside his 'mates in ABR, who were only too happy to oblige.

As I Lay Dying came on after the longest set change of the night for their one-hour show. Giant metal-grated ramps and platforms featuring large light cans beneath gave notice that everything was going to intensify soon. After the lights went dark Jordan Mancino's blazing fast drumming introduced "Through Struggle," soon boosted by guitarists Nick Hipa and Phil Sgrosso, playing a crescendo that was effectively raising the energy level like a jet airliner taking off. It was like adrenaline in the form of heavy metal joy. A perfect intro... Fists and voices were raised in unison as a crowd fed on every pounding note, and there certainly wasn't a single lull in the next hour. Strobe lights illuminated the flying bodies of stage divers making for an intense visual. Besides the absolutely savage metal music that blazed over the sound system, the stage lighting enhanced and added to the thrill-a-second atmosphere. This was most evident in "Confined," with giant cascading blue beams of light. Frontman Tim Lambesis introduced "Meaning In Tragedy" by reminding the fun-loving crowd that "there's more behind the scenes with this band than having a good time." Judging by the ridiculous amount of people on stage with the band at night's end, it's a foregone conclusion that AILD is connecting with its audience. This is excellent.

Clockwise from top: AILD's Nick Hipa; Jordan Mancino showered in lights; August Burns Red getting stretched out mid-riff; hundreds of fists; and Still Remains' TJ Miller sharing the mic [Photos by DVP].

BURDEN OF A DAY

BY TIM GERST

Sarasota, Florida is the home to 52,715 people – of those only 27% are under the age of 30. So round up the family and let's go out to a concert! Opera? No. Country? No. Hardcore? YEAH!

Burden of A Day hails from the retirement community of Sarasota and somehow overcame the typical lifestyle of shuffle board and checkers to create some face melting metal. Their newest album, *Blessed Be Our Ever After*, releases on March 4th and the band is ready to keep up their hard work.

Since the band first formed in 2004 they have spend much of their time on the road performing over 1/3 of the year with the likes of Thrice, The Bled, and All That Remains. Although they keep a heavy tour schedule the band does enjoy winding down some. "We are all really into sports, which we have found not all bands are into. We are also huge football fans, so we always try to somehow sneak into places to watch the games while we're on tour. We play a lot of *Guitar Hero*," says drummer Jesse Hostetler.

What is the band's main source of inspiration? "God is definitely our main source of inspiration. As a guitarist, my main form of worship is playing guitar. So when it comes to writing the guitar parts, I pray that God would give me a song that would glorify Him," proclaims Josh Sommers, the band's guitarist and chief writer. For Jesse, "Every time some kid comes up to me and tells me that we have helped them – whether it would be through something in life or just having fun with our music – that's the most inspiring thing to me, to see those kids faces and realizing how that this is real life and it definitely keeps us humble but yet inspires me to be a better person."

As with any band there are high times and low times and also the dreaded writer's block. What happens when Josh faces writer's block? "Whenever I have a writing block it usually means that there is something in my life that is keeping me from God. So the best thing for me to do is to really get into the word and search my heart to make sure it is pure."

Burden of A Day is humble, modest, and sincere. The members realize that their journey and ministry is not about their fame, but rather about God, and the work that He is doing through them. Starting in the most unsuspected city and branching to all states except Rhode Island and across Europe, Burden of A Day has went from a small minority in a retirement town to a beautifully orchestrated and designed band with their focus on the prize. Jokingly Josh said this when asked where he saw the band in 2 years, "In two years we'll just be putting out our second platinum album." He was only kidding, but rather look for this band to make waves as their newest project hits shelves in March.

burdenofaday.com

Playing in a retirement home near you

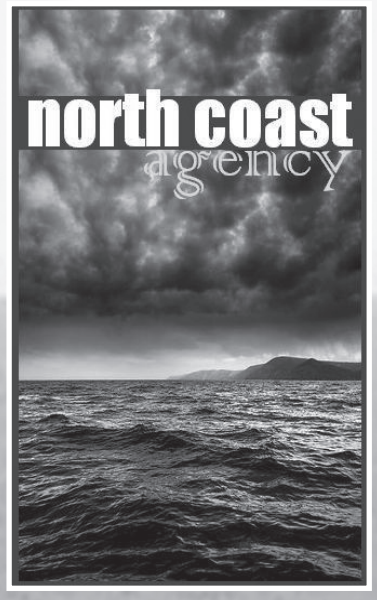

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Photo: Lake VP

ONCE NOTHING

BY TIM HALLILA

In the progression of the heavy music world, it seems the newest permutation to take hold is the addition of a certain Southern Rock flavor within the screaming and breakdowns of metalcore. Enter Once Nothing, one of Tooth & Nail's newest faces, and sure to be a significant player in the heavy music scene in the coming years. They deliver metalcore with enough punch and swagger to make Maylene proud. Vocalist Todd Lowry took the time to answers a few questions on his promising young band.

Tell me a little bit about how the band started. Have you always sounded similar to your current album? Who were your early influences?
We started when I was in high school, in April of 2000. We were just friends that wanted to have fun and write music. We just started playing covers of bands we liked, and then wrote our own songs. We had no idea of how to write music, how to play shows, or anything like that. Somehow, we slowly but surely figured it out, and here we are now. Our early sound was definitely focused around bands like POD, Project 86, and Deftones, stuff like that. It eventually just got heavier and heavier, but we still tried to maintain some sense of groove.

Being from the South, I have to wonder: How do a bunch of guys from Pittsburgh arrive upon such a kickin' Southern Metal vibe?
We've gotten the southern rock comparison a lot as of late, which is totally cool with us. We just always thought we were playing groovin' rock and roll riffs, but whatever people think is cool, as long as they are down with head banging.

Every band seems to have that "I guess we're officially a band now!" story, whether it be tour mishaps, car trouble, meeting your heroes, people knowing your songs... Is there a moment for you guys that stands out in that way?
I've always felt that Once Nothing is a real band. I can honestly say that I live the life I've always wanted. Of course I'm broke and I smell sometimes, but traveling the country, playing shows, and hanging out with kids is amazing. If I had to pinpoint a specific moment for me, personally, it would have to be playing Tooth & Nail day at Conerstone last year. That's where I saw a lot of bands that influenced me, and being able to play on that stage under that Tooth & Nail banner was truly a dream come true.

What would you want a fan to take away from seeing you live?
A sore neck from headbanging too much! Honestly, just to have a good time and see that we are a fun band with fun music, and that we love people and the Lord. We want to be at those shows to hang out with everyone, not just play some riffs and hide in the van.

How do you incorporate faith into your art, or is that even something you consciously aim to do?
I try my best to be honest and up front about my faith. Our band is a group of five believers that are trying their best to follow the Lord's will. Since I write the lyrics, it kind of falls on my shoulders to either let my beliefs out or keep them in. I hope that people see both light and darkness in our music, because I can't sugar coat life. I can just be honest and hope people feel what I am trying to express.

myspace.com/oncenothing

I smell sometimes

RETROACTIVE RECORDS

WHITECROSS – NINETEEN EIGHTY SEVEN (with 6 bonus tracks)
Complete Re-recording of original debut self-titled 1987 release featuring the bonus tracks "Love On The Line" and "Re:Animate" (all Rex Carroll guitar jam/solo) + 4 hidden out takes. Fans of Ratt, Motley Crue, and Stryper won't find anything more worthy of their money than this release! Originally released on Girder Records, this instant classic now finds new life with Retroactive Records.

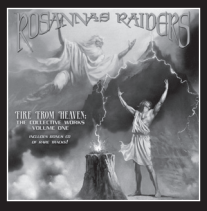
ARMAGEDDON – THE MONEY MASK (Collector's Edition) (2 CD set)
Disc one contains the 1989 (originally on Regency Records) classic metal masterpiece, Money Mask album completely Remastered, plus the bonus track "Blazing Wasteland" from the legendary metal compilation, East Coast Metal (1988). Disc two contains 13 bonus tracksof demos and rarities when they were called Second Chance.

DELIVERANCE – RIVER DISTURBANCE (Collector's Edition)
The original 1994 release in its entirety, completely remastered with all new artwork. Features four high quality bonus tracks (1 rare & 3 previously unreleased). Melodic, dark, and absolutely brilliant progressive metal. Fans of HIM and Savior Machine will rejoice for an enhanced version of the original masterpiece.

DELIVERANCE – AS ABOVE~SO BELOW
Few groups have ever blended epic thrash / speed metal with the elegance and beauty of progressive metal (later period Deliverance) with such devastating skill and brutality. Alternating so many moments of beauty with beastly moments of metallic fury and spine snapping riffs that would seem right at home on a Slayer, Believer, or early Deliverance album.

SARDONYX – MAJESTIC SERENITY / REBEL OF REASON
Remastered and reissued, this previously rare & crunchy thrash metal release now includes the band's original demo! For fans of Testament & early Megadeth!

ULTIMATUM – INTO THE PIT
The masters of thrash metal are back!!! Into the Pit qualifies as a juggernaut of North American metal. Following the footsteps of fellow peers Exodus, Tourniquet, Vengeance Rising, Megadeth. Overkill, and Forbidden, expect fiery, blowtorch riffs and scorching solos, thundering bass, fast drumming and a wealth of Mastodonian rifferry, the boys have clearly learned from their elders, and learned well!



ROSANNA'S RAIDERS – FIRE FROM HEAVEN: The Collective Works (Collector's Edition) 3 albums on 2 CDs. The 1987 release Calling Down Fire and the 1988 release Clothed In Fire (both originally on Pure Metal Records) in their entirety are both on disc 1. Disc 2 has the extremely collectible and previously impossible to find 1985 pro quality 10 song demo called We Are Raiders. Thoroughly remastered for brilliant sonic clarity. For fans of Vixen, Rez, Barnabas, and Heart.

TITANIC – WRECKAGE (THE BEST OF & THE REST OF)
Remastered tracks from the original versions of Maiden Voyage (1st album), Screaming In Silence (2nd album) and their latest Full Steam Ahead. As an added bonus, fans are treated to two rare tracks and two previously unreleased tracks all featuring Robert Sweet from Stryper. 17 total tracks.

MAIN LINE RIDERS – SHOT IN THE DARK
Anthemic hooks, cleverly mixing snarl and attitude, the band has no problems paying homage to their musical rabbis, AC/DC, Guns-n-Roses, and Skid Row, while appealing to fans of modern day bands Vains of Jenna, Buck Cherry, and The Showdown.

All releases available from radrockers.com, cdbaby.com, Northwestern Christian Stores, amazon.com, girdermusic.com, Mardel Christian Stores, christiandiscs.com and your favorite online stores!

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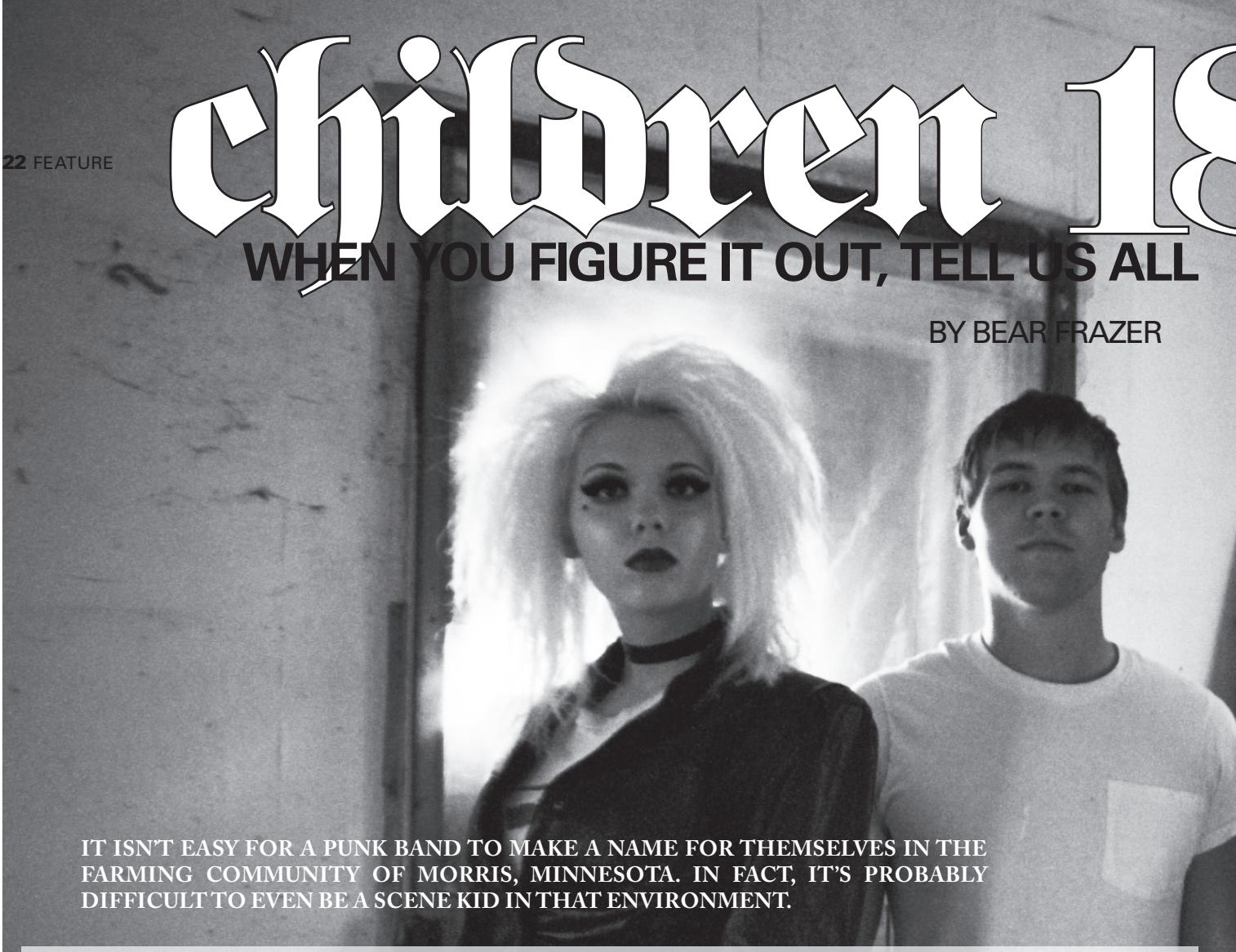
children 18

WHEN YOU FIGURE IT OUT, TELL US ALL

BY BEAR FRAZER



IT ISN'T EASY FOR A PUNK BAND TO MAKE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES IN THE FARMING COMMUNITY OF MORRIS, MINNESOTA. IN FACT, IT'S PROBABLY DIFFICULT TO EVEN BE A SCENE KID IN THAT ENVIRONMENT.

Most residents pursue the traditional lifestyle of growing crops and raising herds of cows, but not David Hostetter, guitarist/vocalist of Children 18:3. The barn and chicken coop his family used to maintain doesn't exist anymore. Despite that, he acknowledges his rural surroundings and is quick to crush any barnyard perception. "We live in the country, but we don't have animals," the 23 year-old states. "Well, except for cats."

The cats he is referring to are running around the house, but that doesn't bother David. He is more concerned about the butterflies in his stomach. The dark-haired songwriter isn't accustomed to doing interviews and, while he is feeling nervous, he is also a bit anxious to spread the word about Children 18:3's self-titled debut album (courtesy of Tooth & Nail Records).

The rock cabaret, also comprised of his 21 year-old brother Seth on drums and 19 year-old sister Lee Marie on bass, dishes out a digestible record consisting of refreshing punk overtones, enriched bass lines and upbeat backdrops with lyricism that pierces the soul.

But getting their music heard outside of Morris has been particularly rough. When the group initially formed in 1999, it was a five-piece ska band that featured David Hostetter on guitar, his brother Seth on drums, and friends that played bass, saxophone and trumpet. To follow in the trend of having numbers in the band name, the syndicate chose their title from Children 18:3, a verse in the book of Matthew which reads, "Unless you are converted and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Although the woodwind and brass instruments supplied an extra flavor, the Hostetters didn't necessarily plan to delve deeper into that genre – in the beginning, that is. "It wasn't like we wanted to be a ska band. It's just our friends, who wanted to play horns, wanted to play with us. So it was like, 'Ok, we'll be a ska band'," David recalls. "It wasn't like a conscious decision."

The setup didn't last. The other three musicians left the group in 2001. Though the Hostetters tried out new bassists, there wasn't one that stuck around for the long haul. So a year later, their sister Lee Marie filled the void.

Now concentrating on punk rock, the trio honed their skills and released their first EP in 2004 entitled *Places I Don't Want To Go* to sell at local shows. Also, they entered the annual Music Tournament hosted by Club 3 Degrees in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Representatives from record labels flew to the yearly event to judge the contest and network with young artists. Though Children 18:3 entered the competition a handful of times, they won the grand prize in 2005, which included free recording time at Winterland Studios in Minneapolis.

Evidently, the rock cabaret took full advantage of the opportunity. They used their reward to record their sophomore EP, *Songs Of Desperation*, an eight-track collection of tasteful compositions with a punk attitude. Although the trio ran out of time, they invested their own money into the project. The whole experience would pay dividends.

When the record came out in 2006, Children 18:3 mailed a copy to Brandon Ebel, the CEO of Tooth & Nail Record whom took a liking to the band when he was a judge at the Music Tournament at Club 3 Degrees. Impressed with their flair, he signed the Morris rockers to a deal in January 2007. It was the perfect situation.

"Tooth & Nail is unique in the fact that they put out records in the Christian niche market and it's very accepted. But they also have bands whom are in the general market and have a strong presence like Underoath, He Is Legend, Anberlin and MxPx. They're just a good label. They're very artsy," David explains. "If you're in the Christian music industry, you're judged by the lyrics and what you say, but not so by Tooth & Nail. Obviously, Brandon [Ebel] doesn't want any of the bands to swear or be directly anti-God on the record, but there is a lot more artistic freedom."

With artistic freedom and support from their label, Children 18:3 is ready to unveil their self-titled masterpiece. The charismatic offering is loaded with pulsating musicianship where colorful rhythms are nicely complimented by a powerful bass resonance and gritty percussion. Also, the vocals of David Hostetter perfectly shine over the diverse melodies, which come across as a mixture of Tom DeLonge of Angels & Airwaves and Brandon Flowers of The Killers.

The rock cabaret immediately sets the tone with their theatrical opener "All For Balloons," a sharp effort with melodic ambience driven by frustration. They even take a page from The Beatles' legendary *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and perform a reprise of the track later in the album. Then, the trio alters their style a tad, but maintain their punk-induced base. They incorporate an upbeat swagger on the optimistic "Ditches," whereas they fuse choppy riffs with oceanic backdrops during the verses of "You Know We're All So Fond Of Dying." But the radio-friendly "Homemade Valentine" is pop punk at its finest.

Children 18:3 also spices up their musical finesse in the vocals department. David and Lee Marie casually play patty-cake with the mic, and the fresh exchanges add more depth to a variety of songs. This is properly introduced during the aggressive "LCM," where the duo encourages an individual to clear their name. The combination gels smoothly when the family blends ska rhythms into teenage anthems "Even Sleeping" and "The City." It also gives strength to a mellower ballad like "Search Warrant," which expresses the idea of self-discovery. With the surplus of energetic tracks, the rock cabaret throws a curveball in the form of "Samantha," a stripped-down composition where David pleads with someone to put the gun down and live for another day.

Though positive morals are reflected in the self-titled debut, the influence of Christianity is rather scarce. In actuality, the record appears dark. While religion may not be the dominating message within the music, the trio plans to use their influence to serve the Lord. "We're definitely all Christians," David states. "We want to help people and we want to promote the power of God, but I haven't quite figured out how yet."

David has time to think about that. In the meantime, he and his siblings are excited to experience life outside the farming community of Morris, Minnesota. With their full-length out in stores, Children 18:3 is ready to fulfill their destinies. "We've been a band for eight years and we really haven't been able to go on tour. The longest tour we've done is five dates around the Midwest and promoting a festival," he admits. "We got hooked up with a booking agency a couple of months ago, but they haven't booked us any shows yet. So that's kind of a drag … but they're booking a tour for the spring."

Perhaps he'll figure out how he can promote the power of God by then.

✖

hawk nelson

WHAT KIDS WANT TO SAY

BY BEAR FRAZER

Jason Dunn and his buddies from Hawk Nelson are off to a fresh start. On this cold afternoon in Ocean City, Maryland, the 25 year-old vocalist completes a sound check at the Roland E. Powell Convention Center. Then, the dark-haired rocker leaves the theater area and walks backstage. As he inches up the hallway, a smile creeps upon his face. "My New Year's resolution is not to spend money that doesn't need to be spent. Like, people go to Wal-Mart and buy something they don't need to buy," he says. "It's painful, but it's a good resolution."

The dynamo is happy for another reason. In coming weeks, his Christian-influenced quartet will unveil their third studio album, *Hawk Nelson Is My Friend*. The captivating record is comprised of spirited verses reflecting those of the teenage population with an infectious combination of melodic rock and signature pop essence at the core.

While they successfully took the finer elements of their music and maximized them to full capacity, Hawk Nelson desperately wanted to pen material that mirrored the outlook of their young fan base. "It's taken off the kids' point of view," Dunn states. "There are so many kids who wanna hear something or say something, but can't say it because their voice isn't heard. I think we've been given a pedestal to say what kids want to say, but haven't had a microphone to say it."

Dunn isn't a psychologist, but he has been left speechless in the past. As he was preparing to graduate from New Life Christian Academy in his hometown of Peterborough, Ontario, Canada in 2001, the senior experienced a phase of uncertainty. "People were asking me, 'What are you going to do after school?' And I never thought of anything," he recalls. "It was a pretty crazy feeling, because when all your friends have plans for after high school and you don't know what you're doing, it kinda sucks."

In 2002, however, he put all his might into Hawk Nelson. The melodic quartet (also then comprised of bassist Daniel Biro, guitarist David Clark and drummer Matt Paige) tried breaking through the musical tundra in the same niche as popular Canadian exports Sum 41 and Simple Plan.

While those bands impacted the mainstream, Hawk Nelson could barely scratch the surface. "At first, we had no following at all," Dunn admits. "We had, like, three friends who would come to our shows and support us."

Though it was discouraging to play at nearly empty venues, the Peterborough entourage continued performing locally and even released *Saturday Rock Action*, their first EP. The eight-track collection generated a strong buzz and with some assistance from their pals in Thousand Foot Krutch, they secured a deal with Tooth & Nail Records.

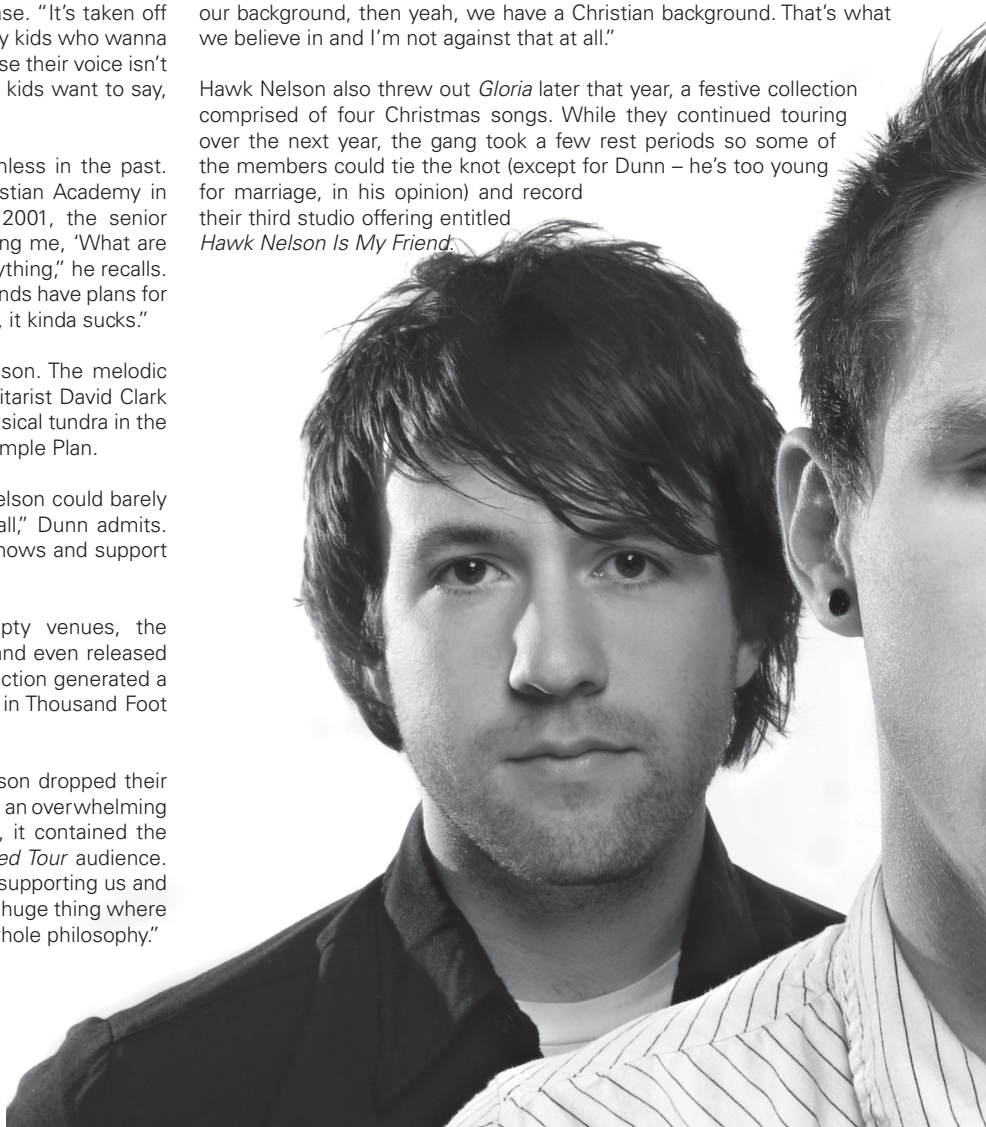
With a label confident in their musicianship, Hawk Nelson dropped their full-length debut, *Letters To The President,* in 2004. It was an overwhelming success. Although the album lacked an overall theme, it contained the enjoyable pop punk flavor that was grazing the *Warped Tour* audience. "People, who didn't even care to know us, just started supporting us and coming to our shows," Dunn explains. "It just became a huge thing where they weren't really our fans, but friends. That was our whole philosophy."

But a career on the road isn't for everyone. Clark and Paige couldn't handle the grueling tour schedule, so they exited the band on good terms. That, however, allowed guitarist Jason Steingard and drummer Aaron "Skwid" Totsi to fill in the vacant slots.

Now, everyone was on the same page and entirely dedicated to the band. Good thing too, because their career elevated to a higher level in 2006 when the Canadians unveiled their sophomore set *Smile, It's The End Of The World*. A handful of songs were aired on Christian radio, but it was their single "Everything You Ever Wanted" that hit number one on the charts. Also, being classified as a Christian band doesn't bother them. In fact, it's something they're proud of.

"God has given us these talents and I think we're a band that realizes that. And, I'm ok with that," Dunn says. "I don't think there is any problem being called a Christian band. We play music for kids, Christian or not. We're blessed to be in a position to sing songs for kids. If it goes back to our background, then yeah, we have a Christian background. That's what we believe in and I'm not against that at all."

Hawk Nelson also threw out *Gloria* later that year, a festive collection comprised of four Christmas songs. While they continued touring over the next year, the gang took a few rest periods so some of the members could tie the knot (except for Dunn – he's too young for marriage, in his opinion) and record their third studio offering entitled *Hawk Nelson Is My Friend*.



The album – **named after their infamous t-shirt** – is the culmination of their young careers. With producer Dave Bendeth (Paramore, Red Jumpsuit Apparatus and Killswitch Engage) at the helm, the Canadian quartet turned out a polished audible gem that blends the finer elements of rock with their charismatic pop flair. Hawk Nelson also improved on their songwriting by collaborating with industry veterans including contemporary music icon Richard Marx, Our Lady Peace vocalist Raine Maida and the legendary Matthew Gerrard.

That richness comes out the gate swinging on their opener "You Have What I Need," a rock zinger containing Ramone-esque chants while Dunn, and company, express their desire for honesty. Those headbanging attributes continue on a variety of tracks, including "Just Like Me," which has an old school punk flavor with lyricism focusing on gossip. Hawk Nelson also becomes experimental, like on the ambient discotech, "Let's Dance," where they promote individuality.

Eventually, the gang falls back on their pop punk forte on their explosive leadoff single, "Friends Like That," but they also supply a handful of romantic teenage ballads like "Arms Around Me" and "Somebody Else. While the collection has a few tearful segments, they are most sensitive on the closer, "I Still Miss You," a majestic composition where Dunn pays tribute to his late grandmother by recalling memories from his childhood.

Hawk Nelson is living up to their new album title. They are using their friendship with their fans to air out the grievances of the youth. "I just think kids have a hard time being heard today," Dunn explains. "Kids are suffering and going through all this stuff. They'll try telling their teachers or friends their problems, but nothing is getting done. I think we need to encourage kids to stand up for what's right and start being a leader in their own dream and group of friends. I think it's our job to be their friend, and to let them know they are not alone in this struggle and walk in this life. So hopefully, we're making a difference."

Dunn is also trying to make a difference in his personal life to and that is saving cash. The vocalist is already making progress on his New Year's resolution. "I haven't used any money yet," he proudly states. "I gotta budget, budget, budget. That's the name of the game."

✖

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Leeland

MOORING IS GROWING UP... ...AND THIS IS A VERY GOOD THING.

BY MATT CONNER

NOW, DON'T GET ME WRONG. IN SOME WAYS, THE YOUNG TEXAN WILL NEVER CHANGE; HIS INNOCENT MANNERISMS AND AW-SHUCKS PERSONALITY OVERFLOW FROM EVERY CONVERSATION I'VE BEEN ABLE TO HAVE WITH HIM (OR ANYONE ELSE IN THE LEELAND QUINTET FOR THAT MATTER). HIS STEADFAST FOCUS ON AND HEARTFELT DESIRE FOR GOD'S PRESENCE TO PERMEATE ALL THINGS AROUND HIM WILL ALSO NEVER LEAVE. THOSE THINGS ASIDE, LEELAND THE PERSON AND LEELAND THE BAND ARE BOTH MATURING AT AN IMPRESSIVE RATE.

By the time you read this, Leeland will be a married man, and bassist Jake Holtz recently as well. Leeland's brother, keyboardist Jack Mooring, already made headlines getting hitched to Michael W. Smith's daughter, Ashley. And along with drummer Mike Smith and new guitarist Matt Campbell, that makes for zero single members in a band filled with them only two years ago. "I'm the last one to get hitched," laughs Leeland Mooring. "They told us we all had two months of downtime to get married, so we all took advantage."

The reason for the hurried pace of life? **Leeland is simply blowing up** everywhere. International touring this year alone will take them from playing festivals in Scotland and England to leading youth conferences in Malawi, Africa in front of 30,000 people. In addition, there's the tour of Israel for the country's 60th anniversary.

"That whole trip should be dangerous-slash-fun," explains Leeland. "We'll probably have to wear bulletproof vests or something. I've never been there, but I've heard it's a great place to seek after God, because that's where he's from. [Laughs]"

In addition, the band readies their follow-up to the smash *Sound of Melodies*. The 2005 debut was equally epic and personal – a musical homage to the Brit-rock the band loves so much (Coldplay, Travis) marked with unmistakably vertical lyrics. Consider it worship music intended more for radio waves than church platforms. It was a formula that had the town of Nashville abuzz before the album ever released, and it placed the young band squarely in the center ring of the Christian music circus.

Enter *Opposite Way*. The band's sophomore album maintains the anthemic feel of the first although the music is much more diverse. Besides that, *Opposite Way* simply feels more mature. It's a band learning to grab hold of the recording process and make it their own.

"On our last record, we were really, really fresh," says Leeland. "We didn't know anything about the music industry and we were green on a lot of issues, especially in the studio. We came in there and didn't know what the heck we were doing. This time was a lot easier. We were a lot more comfortable. We worked with the same producer on the whole record this time, Matt Bronleewe (Natalie Imbruglia, Plumb), and we already had that relationship from the last album. We had the same engineers and same people helping us, so it was just really fun."

"The session went for three weeks or so," Leeland continues. "It was rushed because we didn't have a lot of time. We'd been touring a lot and playing a lot of shows. We had to get in there, get busy and start working. So we stayed in there late every night and would roll back in at 10 in the morning."

The hurried schedule only makes *Opposite Way* more impressive, since the album hardly sounds like a thrown together effort. Instead, Leeland railed against the musical formulas they could have relied upon and created an expansive sonic effort. Perhaps this is a direct result of new collaborative efforts on songwriting.

"Well, we all joke around that **Leeland can play every instrument** so he doesn't really need us," states Holtz with a slight laugh. "But I think all of us bring a different dynamic. Leeland has always been a good songwriter. He's one of those guys who was born with it. We're the ones who have to work on it. On the second record just with traveling and playing as much as we did, we all grew as songwriters. Leeland usually comes up with the main idea and then we all sit around and throw out lyrical ideas and melody changes. So it all just sort of happened."

Leeland agrees that it was beneficial for the band's chemistry to come together creatively, although he admits that it's hard to give those personal moments away.

"When I first started co-writing, it was kind of hard. I was only 15, so I had a really immature mind when it came to writing anyway. I would say, 'Oh man, I don't need anybody to co-write with me.' And then I would hear, 'Well, Tim Hughes, the guy who wrote 'Here I Am To Worship' is getting ready to come and write with you, so you better be ready.' After I got over some of the first co-writing sessions, I learned that it can be really fun. I learned that other people have really great ideas that they can contribute to songs, and that I don't know everything. [Laughs] My mom is always telling me, 'You don't know it all, Leeland.' She always puts me in my place when I get big-headed."

The new openness within the band created magical moments on the road. One night in particular bred three new songs: "Count Me In," "Let It Out Now" and the title track.

"We were actually in the 15-passenger van and on a long trip to another place," explains Leeland. "It was around midnight and I had three ideas for songs. So I started on 'Count Me In' and I had a guitar in the back and I told the guys to come over. Jack brought his journal back there and we were in the back benches and I started playing the melody. We just stayed back there in the van and that night finished all three songs. I'm not joking. I don't know how it happened that quick, but it was really cool. Sometimes you get on a roll and it's easy to get stuff out. That happens very rarely, but it does happen."

Yet for all the maturation, anyone who knows Leeland at all knows that only one thing matters: the band's worshipful mission. And that hasn't changed in the slightest.

"When we recorded *Sound of Melodies*, we saw the need for something like an *Opposite Way*," says Leeland. "We saw the need for that in the kids. The first record was very vertical and all about worship to God and that was awesome. We saw some amazing things. But we also saw a huge hunger in America for kids that really want to be a part of something a lot bigger than them. That was something hitting us hard. So I think we want to encourage a generation of worshippers to give their lives away to God and to know what the true meaning of worship is."

✖

Fireflight

FLIGHT ATTENDANTS

BY STEVEN DOUGLAS LOSEY

Dawn Richardson is the voice of Fireflight. She's not controversial, nor edgy, nor Gothic (even though the latest record company promo photo looks like it.) She's bubbly, she's happy, and her vocals don't sound like Evanescence. The truth is, in the greasy dog eat dog world of rock, she's a former school teacher.

Blasting into the mic is her voice; it's yearning to spread hope to the Y generation because Richardson has been transformed. She's also lived through trials and tribulations, she's experienced deep pain and horrible loss. She's lived what she sings and sung what she's lived. She wears her heart and her soul on sleeve, and genuinely practices love whenever she can. She strives to be a front-woman that helps change lives.

With their sophomore opus titled *Unbreakable,* Fireflight has come to the table ready to spread hope and light with epic musical moments. The record boasts driving guitars; well placed strings and apt musicianship. Fireflight is ready for the next level and they're ready to prove why a female fronted rock band can kick out the jams.

At an early age Richardson lost her brother. "I didn't grow up in the church," she says. "When we lost him that impacted my life very heavily and it impacted my parents. It completely affected who I became." It was a few years later when she was a teen that her parents had two more children. She found herself helping out as a babysitter and sometimes a surrogate mother, bearing weighty responsibilities as a young woman. "I'm a strong believer that God takes the pain in your life and, if you will let Him, He turns it into power."

Richardson and her bandmates feel very strongly about their role in reaching the unreachable, kids lacking love, kids hurting deeply with seemingly no one to turn to. "I was a teacher for a year or so and I saw kids day after day that were so hungry," Richardson reflects. "So many are from one-parent households and it leaves one parent just trying to survive. When I talk to a kid and they tell me they don't want to live anymore, I know how that feels; it's very powerful, very powerful."

Through the allure of myspace Fireflight has shed the light into many dark lives. They made a deal with one another early on that an actual member of the band would personally respond to each and every myspace message they received. Through the conversations Fireflight has played a significant role in affecting teenager's lives. "So many young women have the self esteem of a pigeon," says Richardson. "They're just looking for someone or something to tell them that they're good enough, that they're ok. They just run towards whatever that is. A lot of that creates some really bad choices."

"There's too much of a focus on self satisfaction," says the band's co vocalist and guitarist Justin Cox. "The media teaches our youth that making themselves happy is all you have to worry about; but that's not biblical, because we're supposed to put others first."

Youth's gone wild, depression, suicide, and many other negatives are the elements that surround so many teenagers. Many seem lost; many seem to have regulated themselves to mediocrity and cynicism and at times it seems overwhelming. "On myspace today kids are questioning their sexuality and questioning whether or not they should kill themselves," says Cox. "That's pretty heavy stuff. We're by no means counselors, but the first step is to talk to them when they think no one cares about them at all." Richardson echoes, "Myspace allows them to pour out their heart to you," she says. "It gives us an opportunity to share and try to help them get help. They're missing so much in their hearts; you can just tell. We have pop culture that tells them their physical appearance and their sexuality is the way to achieve, so that's where their value is."

Giving hope to the hopeless and light to the darkness is a noble goal. The band realizes that today's kids have an incredible amount of emotional baggage. They acknowledge that each and every contact they have with their fans could plant a seed that will bloom down the road. "When I was a kid if a band that I dug took the time to personally write me, that would have blown me away," says Cox.

"We care very deeply about our fans," Richardson injects. "We really believe that God has so much love for people all over the United States and they're not getting it from church or anywhere. We so desperately want them to experience God's love. The fact is God made each detail of every single one of us. He loves us and He's so powerful that we are considered a bigger masterpiece then the mountains and all the beautiful things we see around us."

Fireflight is excited about their latest release *Unbreakable*. The band poured themselves into each cut, offering up rock anthems all throughout the disc. Many tunes exude the vibe of yesteryear, when arena rock ruled. "We all listen to Def Leppard and I think that's all you need to know," says Cox. "We've really tried to make the songs sound as big as possible. A lot of the cuts have an epic type of feel to them. I grew up listening to bands like Skid Row and Poison that had the massive power ballads. That's the sound we captured a lot of the time."

Throughout the disc songs like "Brand New Day" find the band venturing into new territory and actually using strings for the first time. "During that

song's intro there's an incredible cello part," says Cox. "We also loaded up with distortion and I actually put the neck of my guitar up to my throat and sang a note through the guitar pick-ups. Those kinds of cool moments really created some amazing tension on the record."

On other cuts the band leaned on the 'less is more' philosophy, stripping away and finding the balance. "There's substance in simplicity," Cox says. "There are always spots for a guitar solo, but there's a lot of power in three or four chord progressions or letting a chord ring." An example would be the song "Wrapped In Your Arms," where the band set up drummer Phee Shorb in the kitchen of the house they recorded in. "When we were recording, we actually used my laptop as a room mic for the drums. We wanted it stripped down like a groove from the seventies. Phee even detuned his snare to a point of almost ripping the heads."

Other magazines, other journalists have often monotonously blasted Richardson and bandmates with some of the same questions time after time, interview after interview. As is the case with a female-fronted band many times comparisons are drawn out of ignorance and laziness. Being compared to Flyleaf, Evanescence and the ilk is flattering, but sonically all the bands are vastly different. "Yes, they are rock, yes, we are all girls, but that's where the similarities really end," says Richardson. "'Oh, you sound like that other band with the girl singer (insert name here).' That has caused a lot of frustration in the past," she admits. "Many times when you think of a girl-fronted band you often think of wimpy music," says Cox. "I personally have always hated girl-fronted bands. Sometimes it turns the girl into a solo artist with a backing band; but in Fireflight we all write, we all contribute. For the first time ever with this band I knew I was accomplishing something musically and spiritually. Dawn is an amazing front person even though sometimes we have to tell her to put away her knitting at the merch table." Richardson sums it up best, adding a theological chapter to sum up the band. "Quite frankly, God has really put his hand on Fireflight, because we begged Him to. He's made supernatural things happen for us so we feel like there are no limits to what we can do."

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the Myriad

NEVER PRAY FOR PATIENCE

BY DAVID STAGG

IN THE MIDDLE AGES, THE LONGBOW WAS USED LIKE A MODERN-DAY MISSILE, DELIVERING A BLANKET ATTACK AGAINST AN ENEMY. AN ARCHERY BATTALION WOULD LINE UP AND LAUNCH HUNDREDS OF ARROWS, COVERING THEIR TARGET. WHEN THE BOW EVOLVED SO THAT TO WHERE IT REQUIRED MORE PRECISE SHOOTING, THE ARCHER HAD TO BE INCREDIBLY STILL. SO INCREDIBLY STILL THAT THE ARCHERS WOULD COUNT THEIR OWN BREATHS AND ALIGN THEIR HEARTBEATS SO THEY COULD RELEASE THE ARROW IN BETWEEN THEM, ASSURING A PERFECT FLIGHT TOWARD THE TARGET.

This is how **The Myriad**, a group of five guys from Seattle, explains the process of recording their upcoming release and the title of the record *With Poise, With Arrows*.

It is a calculated effort, a definitive labor of love, one they've held their breath and timed their heartbeats to get just right. They say they've spent six years chugging away at their band, chugging away at what their guitarist would call "the record they were born to make."

But more importantly, they're now ready to shoot. The only question now is where their arrow hits on the target.

The day after New Year's, I get ahold of three members of The Myriad, and they're all in different parts of the country. Bassist John Roger Schofield is in North Bend, Washington (think *Twin Peaks*) visiting in-laws, vocalist Jeremy Edwardson is out in Sacramento recording a band, and guitarist/piano player Steven Tracy is in Tucson, AZ—"We're taking over the west," they say (The rest of the five-piece outfit is made up of drummer Randy Miller and guitarist Jonathan Young). The band supposedly played a live New Year's Eve stint on MTV the night before as part of a celebration from MTV (we'll get to that in a second), and I was surprised that they had all already packed up and separated and gone home in less than 24 hours—the 24 hours post-New Year's nonetheless. Apparently it was just a quirk and clever wording from MTV; they actually performed live on December 15 and the show was just re-aired. It's fine by them. A good portion of today's youthful audience actually watches MTV for the celebrities and for one of the biggest New Year's Eve celebrations. The Myriad, it would seem, were the benefactors of good timing.

If timing plays any part in the success of a band (read: I'm not so sure Shaggy would be the best selling artist of 2008), The Myriad, as it would also seem, could be almost as lucky as a band can get. Just like an archer taking pains preparing the timing of his shot only to let it go and have nature take over, The Myriad have done all they can as a band to take pains to prepare and release their record—and then hope nature runs its due course. Then the perfect timing kicks in.

The band had painstakingly held off on releasing *Poise*—despite it being virtually finished around a year ago—for a variety of reasons, only to finally set a permanent date in Spring 2008. They signed with their label Koch Records in the summertime, and the label wanted to put out an EP in late Fall and push the final release of the full album to March. The band agreed. "Once we heard that the record was going to come out eight months later," Edwardson explains, "we felt like putting out the EP was an awesome idea. We wanted to be able to give something to show everybody what we've been working on. It's been a long time coming for us to put out a record so it seemed like we had to put something out. We got really excited about putting out the EP." They had already released one album, *You Can't Trust a Ladder*, from 2005.

In the mean time, Schofield got an e-mail from a friend saying they should sign their band up for some contest. When they checked it out, it seemed like another Myspace, Facebook-type of thing, but they put up a song and a photo anyway. And then on October 1—between the release dates of the EP and LP—they got a call.

"We were driving through the desert, somewhere in New Mexico or Arizona, and it was this guy who said, 'Hey this is MTV. We're calling from New York. We just wanted to congratulate you, because you made it into the Top 12.' And we were like, 'The Top 12 of what?'" Edwardson says as they all laugh.

The band had entered what's known as the *Dew Circuit Breakout tour*, and the winning alumni include bands like Taking Back Sunday, Thursday, and Yellowcard. It's an MTV2 thing. They narrow a bunch of random submissions (like 4,000 of them) down to 12 bands, set up an on-line voting place, and have the fans take it from there. "We started telling people on the tour about it, to go vote on-line," Edwardson says. "Then we had made it to the Top 6, then the Top 3, and then on December 15 we found out we were voted the number

continued on page 39

"Hey this is MTV. We're calling from New York. We just wanted to congratulate you, because you made it into the Top 12.' And we were like, 'The Top 12 of what?'"

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The Myriad | cont'd

one band. It was crazy and out of the blue." They filmed a music video, were put into rotation on MTV2, and a buzz that had been building for six years now had some validation. It was the perfect thing for a band who in three months would be releasing their record.

It's that kind of timing—those between the heartbeats, between the breath moments—that seem to have befallen The Myriad and the band know it, too. "It's been kind of surreal how perfect the set up has been," Schofield says. "We signed with Koch records last year in the summer and sort of finished up the record with them on board. When Koch stepped in, they said, Hey, let's put out an EP this Fall and then release the record next year in March. It seemed like forever … The MTV2 competition sort of came out of nowhere, and then to win the whole thing? It couldn't have been set up more perfectly."

It's a classic case of Rome not being built in a day. You wake up one morning, and—wouldn't you know it—there's Rome. No one ever stops to think that it certainly never felt that way to the people that built Rome. Tracy explains further: "We've been working on this record for, like, a year and a half, and we thought we were finishing up a little over a year ago, but one thing led to the next, it ended up getting postponed. Because of all that, we kind of ended up finishing the record and doing it ourselves." It gave the band a little extra freedom to actually write the songs they wanted, gave them the time to pin the songs down to perfection. "We didn't really have a label at the time and we just decided we wanted to make the record that we wanted to make," Tracy continues. "That's kind of why it ended up taking so long. By the time (we signed with Koch) we were just itching to get (*With Poise, With Arrows*) out. We wanted to give the label a chance to do their jobs, though, and they had some good ideas, like releasing the EP first."

The band initially felt that it might have been a little risky for Koch to take them on; they didn't have a label or anyone telling them that summer how to record their music or what it should sound like, but they believe that with where music is today, they're feeling quite serendipitous. "We've always sort of done a version of what we do (musically)," Tracy says. "Even when we started, we had the same vision for what we do musically. We're really lucky in that our label saw what we were trying to do—and it was probably even a little risky for them, what it was we were trying to do artistically. Maybe a few years ago it wouldn't have connected the same, but for whatever reason, for whatever's happening in music… We just feel really lucky that people have connected with it. It feels like a baby we've been birthing for six years. It's the album we've been waiting our whole lives to make."

All of the songs on the EP precursor to *With Poise, With Arrows* have since been re-mastered, and one of the songs got completely remixed about a month ago. The EP has a track on it that's not even going to be on the album, making it kind of a like bonus track. On the new album (out of 12 songs) there will be eight tracks that will have never been released at all. Tracy undermines this reasoning: "That's not entirely true, because eight tracks actually came out in the '70s."

It seems the guys in this band have a penchant for that kind of humor. I asked them earlier if they feel like their rise to success was quick, and Schofield responds they've only been together for four months, so they're kinda freaking out. He combines the two—his humor and his description about the past year that the band was waiting and working on the new record: "Last year, putting together a record was like sneaking up on a pond in the woods. We were in full camo. And there were all these beautiful ducks, fluttering around and pooping everywhere. It was very frustrating. But by this time this year, we've managed to train them all and really put our ducks in a row."

They performed live with two other bands on the winning night of the *Dew Circuit Tour* contest, and next thing they're playing an after-party at the three-story The Delancey in East Village with Cobra Starship and Cartel and with Pete Wentz and Ashlee Simpson in the audience. "It didn't seem that strange," Tracy says about playing in a mecca of hedonism after coming off playing a tour with David Crowder. "(That) tour was a really amazing time for us, but it was sort of a new experience in that we're so used to playing regular sort of clubs and venues, it didn't really feel that strange. It felt pretty natural, and everyone there (at MTV) ended up being super cool."

This past fall, The Myriad was asked by David Crowder to join his band on tour, playing clubs around the nation. This is also where I have to admit that when I first heard of The Myriad, it was because I saw them open for David Crowder on that tour. I had no knowledge of their previous releases, their years spent together as a band, working hard to get to these types of moments. I just assumed their rise to success was quick—one day they're on tour with David Crowder, the next they're playing MTV and getting a video put into rotation. "We've been at this band for six years," Schofield says.

Tracy adds: "It doesn't feel fast at all because we've had a long and busy year recording the album and getting all that stuff taken care of and being out on the road with David Crowder. But it's been a long road; another album came out before the EP. We've been going at it awhile It definitely doesn't feel quick—it just feels like the fruits of our hard work." The band is quick to point out that "deserved" is not the word they would use. They don't equate long, hard years with the belief that they deserve attention; in fact, they're very humble about their current streak of circumstances.

Because they were playing on tour with Crowder, I was ignorant enough to just assume that the band made its name on a Christian tour circuit or by playing in churches or Christian festivals. I wasn't really close to being correct. The band spends most of their time playing in clubs around the country, and not on Sunday mornings. "For The Myriad, we've always just written songs for everybody," Edwardson says. "It was really cool when David Crowder asked us to come out; it was his first total club tour, so every club on the whole tour was like the House of Blues or the Hammerstein Ballroom. We don't do anything different depending on where we're playing. We just want to share our music."

✖

Photos: Jonathan R. Willis

2007 Readers' Poll

A GOOD YEAR FOR METAL

DEMON HUNTER
Favorite Band

2 As I Lay Dying
3 Paramore

Favorite Album

2 *An Ocean Between Us* (AILD)
3 *Plagues* (The Devil Wears Prada)

Storm The Gates Of Hell
(Demon Hunter)

Favorite Album Cover

2 *An Ocean Between Us* (As I Lay Dying)
3 *The Physics Of Fire* (Becoming The Archetype)

32 COVER STORY

Demon Hunter

DEMON HUNTER 33

OPENING UP THE FIERY GATES
BY STEVEN DOUGLAS LOSEY

IT'S WHEN BLOOD'S DRIPPING OUT OF YOUR FACE AND YOUR NOSE HAS BEEN BEATEN. WHEN YOUR TOOTH IS CHIPPED, YOU'VE LOST A SHOE, YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS AND YOUR WALLET. THAT'S WHEN YOU ARE STANDING IN A DEMON HUNTER PIT.

These are fans that have put up with abuse in the form of minimal tours, shows, and appearances. They've driven, they've waited, they've persevered; but, most importantly, they anticipate the day they will see their band again.

Now there is reason for the Blessed Resistance to celebrate. With the release of their fourth opus, Demon Hunter is back with *Storm the Gates of Hell*. Metal is raising a fist, fans their lighters, parents an eyebrow and Demon Hunter some serious hell from the stage.

It isn't a secret who 'these' fans are. With the heavy metal thunder of the KISS Army, the Blessed Resistance forges forward patiently waiting on their band. From the beginning they have been fervent and fanatic. "We've seen tanks over in Iraq with our logo spray painted on the side," says vocalist Ryan Clark. "There's a German fan who wrote "F" the devil on the hood of their car. It was covered with a bunch of Demon Hunter stickers. I don't know if they understood just how harsh the "F" word is in English."

The band has always been about the fans. They play for these kids, but when they can't play, they release a lot of material. *Storm the Gates of Hell* is the band's fourth record in five years. Clark realizes there have been droughts at times, but is emphatic when discussing the extra lengths the band goes through for the faithful. "We've always tried to do things in other ways," Clark says. "We correspond through our website; we do as many videos as we can. We try to stay active in ways that we don't have to be on the road."

So Demon Hunter records on, *Storm the Gates of Hell* is a defining moment for them. It literally brings truth to a lost generation. "It's amazing how blatant the record is in terms of our faith," Clark states. "There's a song on the special edition called "Grand Finale" that I wrote some Revelation type lyrics. I think this record is pretty eclectic. When you listen all the way through you have to be able to listen to both the ups and downs from heavy to mellow."

Storm the Gates of Hell isn't subtle. As the band has matured and grown, so has their faith and their stance, so why hide it? With the release, Clark and company rile up demons with bareback theological truth and relentless fervor. "We're bringing a true message of Christ to an otherwise lost scene," Clark adds. "I think it's a misconception that all metal-heads and rock and rollers are messed up or come from the wrong side of the tracks. There is a lot of pain and reasons why people get into that type of music to begin with. I think we are a breath of fresh air on the other side of what other bands are teaching and preaching."

While the band's heaviest songs, like "Lead Us Home," finds them experimenting with blast beats; other tunes, like "Carry Me Down," echo more of an earthy vibe. "There are a lot of acoustic things going on all over that song," Clark injects. "We put all acoustics in the verses and

Photos: David Stuart

Favorite Article

2 As I Lay Dying (Doug Van Pelt)
3 Paramore (Amanda Curtis)

RYAN CLARK

Favorite Singer

2 Aaron Gillespie (The Almost, Underoath)
3 Andrew Schwab (Project 86)

ANDREW SCHWAB (Project 86)
Favorite Lyricist
2 Ryan Clark (Demon Hunter)
3 Tim Lambesis (As I Lay Dying)

FAMILY FORCE 5
Favorite Live Show
2 As I Lay Dying
3 Mute Math

JOSH CHILDERS
Favorite Guitar
2 Randy Torres (Project 86)
3 Phil Keaggy

STEVE DAIL (Project 86)
Favorite Bassist

2. John Cooper (Skillet)
3. Andy Trick (TDWP)

OH, SLEEPER
Favorite New Band

2. The Almost
3. The Devil Wears Prada

BRADLEY HATHAWA
Favorite Unsigned

2. ilia
3. After The Tragedy

"The Sound of Truth" (AILD)
Favorite Song

2. "Fading Away" (Demon Hunter)
3. "Nothing Left" (AILD)

JORDAN MANCINO
Favorite Drummer

2. Aaron Gillespie (Underoath)
3. Yogi Watts (Demon Hunter)

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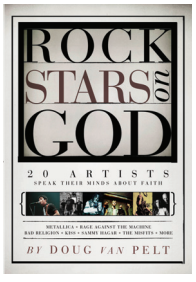
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What **Shiny Toy Guns** Says

SOMEONE SENT ME A LINK TO A SHINY TOY GUNS VIDEO SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, AND I WAS HOOKED. WHILE TEETERING ON EXTREMES BETWEEN TECHNO, POP, AND ROCK, THEIR VIBE STUCK ITS HOOK INTO MY PSYCHE AND HASN'T LET GO, FORMING A UNIQUE SHINY TOY GUNS LOBE IN MY BRAIN THAT ONLY ITS MUSIC CAN SATISFY. IT WAS FUN DOING ANOTHER FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW, THIS ONE IN ONE OF THE LOCKER ROOMS IN THE ARENA WHERE THE TEXAS LONGHORNS PREP FOR BASKETBALL GAMES, COMPLETE WITH A MARKER BOARD FOR COACHING STRATEGIES TO GET MAPPED OUT. I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED TO DISCOVER THAT I ALREADY SORT OF KNEW THESE MUSICIANS IN SHINY TOY GUNS, BUT I'LL LET YOU POSSIBLY MAKE THE SAME DISCOVERIES AS YOU READ ON.

(Synthesizer player/programmer Jeremy Dawson picks up recent issue of HM and glances at it, feign shouts "Paramore!" in a low whisper.)

Okay, so David Bowie, Peter Murphy and Pete…
(Still glancing at magazine cover) Cornerstone!? HM – this is a Christian magazine, right?

Uh-huh.
Oh, awesome, man! We played Cornerstone… I'm sorry, I haven't seen that name in years. Chad and I used to be on a small Christian dance label run by Scott Blackwell.

Yeah. N-Soul, right?
Yeah, N-Soul. And we played Cornerstone about five years in a row. We played Creation and one in New Hampshire…

What was the name of the band?
Cloud To Ground.

Oh yeah! I reviewed you guys in the magazine.
Really? Shiny Toy Guns is basically Cloud To Ground reformed as a rock band.

Wow. It's a great sound. I love the mixture of styles.
With Shiny Toy Guns?

Yeah. I actually liked Cloud To Ground, too.
That was us being teenagers trying desperately to run equipment. That's some scary music on those cds, man. So funny.

I actually liked 'em. I remember being impressed. I still have 'em. So anyway, David Bowie, Peter Murphy and Peter Gabriel were tapped and they're each going to produce one of your songs as bonus tracks for a special re-issue of We Are Pilots.
Oh, I'd crap myself! I'd run away.

So, which songs would each guy do … and why?
Wow! That's a great question. Um, it's funny. I actually did a Bowie cover. We just produced a Bowie cover with Scott Weiland – "Fame." I actually have it on the bus. It's really cool. Gabriel would do … I think Bowie would do "Shaken." Gabriel would do "Waiting." Peter Murphy would do… I think he would do "Shaken," too.

What do you think they'd do differently?
I don't think Gabriel would do that much to "Waiting," actually. I think he'd just sing it. That's really all he has to do – is sing it. We'd have him do guest vocals. Peter Murphy would make it dark and cool. Bowie would probably add. I'm thinking old Bowie. Bowie now is kinda boring and not really cool. He would probably add some crazy, flamboyant horns and some weird tape samples and stuff. That is probably what he'd do. I wasn't a big Bowie fan. That movie killed it for me – *Labyrinth*. The script… The movie was okay, but he would start singing a song… The songs were so bad – written-wise – it just kinda killed the movie for me. And *Dark Crystal* was such a better film.

Great film.
It was such a great movie. 1980-something… I was a young kid.

I really like that and Beastmaster.
I didn't see Beastmaster. I never saw it.

Really?
I saw *Dark Crystal* all the time. It was one of the few movies I was allowed to watch.

So, what is going to happen with rising gas prices and how is it going to effect us all?
Are they going up again?

I just paid three dollars and 14 cents a gallon.
It doesn't matter, our bus is just gonna drink it. We haven't been home in three years, so I'm probably going to walk into that. I live in LA, and who knows what it is in LA. It's probably $9.75 a gallon. We just need to get some mandation (sic) and some… I'm not real sure why that we don't do the ethanol thing more, and I'm not sure why we're completely dependent on foreign oil, cause there's so much oil in Alaska. It's ridiculous. We've toured Alaska two or three times and there's enough oil in Alaska for the whole world many times over, but there's all these regulations that don't allow people to go out there and start drilling and digging, because of the eco system. The oil companies have never ever made more money than they've ever made right now – hand over fist profits. And no one's noticing that. You'd think. It's a free country, so if you create a business and it works, and you make money, then you're receiving the fruits of your labor. But at the same time, it's crushing hundreds of thousands of people, their own personal economies and their lives, so there has to be some sort of thing where it's controlled. Our government… There's several arms of our government that come from that industry and still have very much a vested interest in that industry, and so the priority right now is never going to be, "What can we do to control big oil?" There's nothing we can do with it until we get a level of integrity and honesty back into the United States government, which… There was a little bit of that with Reagan. There was a lot of that back in the day when most people were honest – like FDR and the presidents that were actual incredible leaders. We just need leadership. If we had proper leadership that was honest and based on virtues and humility and integrity, then there wouldn't be things like that. There wouldn't be interfering in foreign affairs militarily. We'd be interfering in things that matter, like starvation and disease, rather than control. We're never in control. We just enjoy the emulation of being in control, because it makes us feel like we're worthy. Humans are never in control of anything. We're just humans, little pieces of crap stuck on the underside of a combat boot until we spend time to be like a useful individual with a purpose that is not for ourselves or for our own, but for the other people around us – the same things in the same relationships, like you or I have, or someone else who is content with their life. If that makes sense at all. I don't know where I got to that from a gas price, but… left field.

How does performing your music translate from performing in small clubs to arenas – like on this tour?
Literally, physically, it's hard to hear in these rooms. It's like "Doom! (pauses) "gakakakaka." It just bounces everywhere. Even when… This will probably sell out tonight, but it's a freakin' basketball stadium. It's still going to be bouncing everywhere. It's going to seem – between the four of us – that it's lost, because we're like (makes windblown sound noise) spread out. It's still fun, but it's different... When you have a room literally bleeding and sweating, with low ceilings, hands in the air all the way back... There's, like, 300 people in there… There's an intensity with that that is so much fun. But, 7,000 people jumping up and down is really fun, too. You kind of focus on the big picture and not what you're hearing swimming around your ears and just know that it probably does sound good out there. You just can't hear it. Your monitor becomes your best and only friend. In a club, when you're playing you can pick people out and you can hear the sound system around you and it's hot and sweaty and rock and roll. At arena shows, you have to reflect that same intensity, even though it sounds like crap all around you. Then the lights… The outdoor ones are the worst – especially when the wind's blowing, no smoke machine… We're addicted to smoke machines. You have to have that same charisma for the kids who paid money. You get up there and play, but you can't hear your instrument. You can't hear your vocals. You get up there and have fun and try to put on the best show that you can.

What do you think of Jesus Christ?
Jesus Christ? (clears throat) Sadly, no one's asked me that in a year. I think that… It sounds selfish, but it would be neat to have like a mobile … like a band bus you could go to and there'd be people there, like accountability people in there. When you're on tour, it's really… There's all these things that are around, loaded with temptations and all the fun things of the world. And you have people that you phone back to for accountability, but it's like a pen-pal. It's not the same. You don't have a buddy with you all the time. It sure would be neat to have a bunch of people… Paramore, for instance, and Flyleaf – they choose a road of absolute… Like, if you play a show with Flyleaf, their dressing room and entire backstage around them is free of alcohol and cigarettes, blah blah blah. We choose to drink, or we enjoy drinking – not like in crazy excess, but having a few beers before or after a show or drinks and whatever. In my life I don't feel a direct conviction. Maybe for other people... For instance, my drummer, he doesn't drink at all. It doesn't bother him that I do or that Chad does, but he just chooses not to. But it's tough to be in an environment and not have somebody with you when it's like: 'Should I get in that car and go to that party? I probably shouldn't,' but it's just me all by myself to have to make that decision. So, as far as Christ goes, it's really hard to have that as something to think about all the time when you're touring and you're in a band. It really creates a wedge in a direct relationship or a regular prayer life or fellowship with others that believe the same. It makes it really tough. It really does.

And my church fell apart in California, which is really weird for me. It's the coolest church in the whole world. They moved up to a bigger facility and it was just so expensive. It wasn't like a big *church* church or anything. It was just an old American Legion Hall. And they built it into this huge sort of multi… This technology-driven worship center. They had all this interactive video stuff, so people… It was just so exciting to go there, but the bills and utilities… It just got out from underneath them. There were so many projects, where we'd go out and they'd spend thousands of dollars on sleeping bags and toothbrushes. We'd load them in these pickups and drive down to these old riverbeds in Ventura County, California. At the bottom of the riverbeds they'd have all these people laying… They just live there. One time this man and his daughter and his wife were laying there in the base of this riverbed and it gets really, really cold at night in the winter in Ventura County. This dad wraps his body around his wife and his baby and freezes to death so that they could live. The story got back to our pastor, who was like… It was such a serious thing that everyone walks in and sits down in a nice chair and he's like, "We're all standing here; we have our $150 shoes on…" He goes, "I want all of you to leave the church – every single one of you: get up and leave. Go to Target, go to Walmart, go to K-Mart, buy a sleeping bag and then come back. Do not come back here unless you have a sleeping bag. If you don't have $7.98, come right up here and I will give you $7.98. Because a man died so that his daughter and his wife could be warm!? And I'm talking to you with a leather jacket on?" He takes his jacket off and he throws it. He goes, "I have an expensive wedding ring on, because me and my wife got married. We spent thousands of dollars on a ring and a man died to make his daughter warm?!" The entire church went to Walmart and they packed these trucks and we just drove. We rolled sleeping bags down and people were running up and grabbing them. It was so intense.

Wow. That's awesome.
But it was really tough hearing that the building just… Things just got… We were a very controversial type of church. Absolute faith-driven, you know, the Bible is the Word of God, period – nothing and nutty at all…

No snakes?
Yeah, no snakes. No cyanide. But the pastor's 31 years old, with red hair and covered in tattoos. And everyone … all the bands… It was like the cool thing to do. But we didn't having any funding from the Southern Baptist Convention or the Pentecostal Holiness Center. It was like whatever cash we had kept that thing going. There was just too many of us – broke guys – now it's in a skate park. They run it in a skate park. It really freaked me out when the church…

Is that Mikee Bridges and Skate Street?
Yeah! All of Mikee's high school friends – his buddies – started this thing. Greg Russinger. They do a thing now called "Soul something."

Yeah, Mikee's a good friend.
Mikee's crazy.

How much do you use the veneer, superficiality and plastic-ness of disco and dance music / techno – how much do you use in what you do? And how much of that makes you bummed out and (how) tired of it are you? I don't know if that makes any sense.
A little. It's a deep one. What's veneer? Like that stuff on the wall?

Yeah, like formica.
Trust me, we were bummed out and tired of it, or we'd be doing it; because we were doing dance music before this. We just got sick of it. We got sick of the drugs and the… You walk into a club and everyone's jacked out of their mind. The music started getting really lame and boring. We don't really… It's not really techno and dance music, we

just started using technology and electronic music and the simplicity of a drumset, a bass, guitar and a vocal – direct rock and roll – and fuse that into sort of a subgenre of music that we call future-forward rock, taking to another level of technology. Not afraid to use drum machines, programmed computers, synthesizers, but keep it rock. Keep it cool, and keep focusing the lyric, focusing the song and the melody, so that you retain the integrity of the song and you're not just focused on a sound – "Oh, it sounds cool," or "It's a great rhythm," but you have to be able to play it on an acoustic guitar with you or I around a campfire and go, "It's a cool melody," or it's not going to sound good…

Are you done with that question?
We just use the fun part of it, I guess. There's some stuff that leans to dance, but to us it's not dance. It's just rock and pop songs. Fortunately, we went through a period of that in our lives and we are able to bring pieces and elements of that and stick it on. What I was saying is, "You can't paint a turd gold. It's still a turd. You've gotta have a song in there. You can have a message. You can have a sound. But if you don't have a song, it's not gonna stick against the wall. It'll fall off the wall.

So, what's going on with Nightmare Before Christmas?
How'd you know about that?

Bethany (their tour manager). She said that's why she went to Guitar Center.
Oh yeah, what'd I get?

Some kind of pre-amp.
A 6176. Have you ever seen one of those before?

Nuh-uh.
Do you know what a UA-1176 is?

Nuh-uh.
It's a click-compressor. It's a million dollars.

Really?
It's one of those, but has a pre-amp. It's just a very fun vocal toy. It makes your vocal sound like this big (holds hands wide apart). It's amazing. Well, this *Nightmare* thing is really cool. What they did is they took all the songs from the whole film and they reached out to a group of bands and artists and asked them to re-interpret each movement of the soundtrack as a group. We got the finale, which is really, really cool. I can't believe we got it. I can't believe it. We found out that it was hand-picked by Tim Burton -- each band and each piece. Tori Amos and Billy Corgan – they're doing one. Fall Out Boy. Sigur-Ros. It's really cool. I have to go in and clean up a bunch of vocals with that new machine. But that will come out in February, I think. It'll be out everywhere – *Nightmare Before Christmas: The Re-interpreted Soundtrack*.

I'm going to have to get that. Alright, tell me about the new song we're going to hear tonight.
Revelation Calls. The song was written in England. It's about, I'd say, in the middle of a tour we did in February, I think. It was a very, very tough tour – 42 cities in a row.

That's cold.
It's "English Cold," so it's not exactly cold wet, it's just sad and cloudy and gross and foggy. It's like bad food and fish 'n' chips everywhere. Mushy peas… It's one of Chad's and it's about being separated from your wife and daughter, your family and life and to become separated from yourself. When you're out and you're on tour and you hit a bad point, and you're in England, and you do a show every night, and you're all by yourself and your dark bunk in the bus, and he just… He went to a deep, dark, low place. It got to the point where him and I would have to leave and just go sit and have coffee and just talk. He was about to lose it – literally lose it, freak out… And he slowly started to shake it off and then when he got to a comfortable place he sat down with a notebook and wrote this song.

"Days, I haven't seen days. I'm surrounded by an unfamiliar face..." Like, you look around, cars are going the other direction. You're 6,000 miles away from your 3 year old daughter. But, at the end of the day, that hour and a half on that stage or the day that you get to go home, and you get to see your family, it's like… It's part of our usual style of lightly masking, you know, biblical context and actual things into the music. It just happens naturally. It's like, "When revelation calls, all these things go away." It's, like, everything's, like, okay. There's no more pain, no more emptiness. It just goes. You're back in the control of your emotions, your feelings, and it's just amazing. And that's what this song's about. It's about, literally, being just driven into the ground on tour and not having any way out, and then Allison calls and everything just falls off, all the weight and everything bad just falls away. I don't have the lyrics memorized.

When was the last time music made you cry? Describe…
The last time I cried was the stupid movie *Notebook*. I'm never watching it again, ever! Have you ever seen that movie?

I have.
Don't watch that movie. Chad and I watched that movie and we both went back to the bunk (makes bawling, crying sounds), we call our girls. "I miss you!" So sad... When music made me cry? Wow.

Describe the moment and explain what moved you.
(takes deep breath) Goodness. That's a good one. I remember the moment, now I'm trying to remember the actual song. It's not a real good band, but it's a real good song. It wasn't that long ago, actually. It was in San Francisco. Have you heard of Saosin?

Yeah.
From Orange County... They have a song on their new album, called, "You're Not Alone." And it's sort of a ballad. It's about this kid who is contemplating suicide. His girlfriend was like, "You're not alone. There's more to this, I know. You can help yourself. You can make it work," or something. There's really cool lyrics. But it's so epic. It just hit me. It hit a nerve. I put the song on repeat. I had a rental car and had some crap to do in San Jose and I was driving up and down the 101 and it was just … it was intense. I just had a… Like, my mother died seven weeks ago. So…

Wow. Sorry.
So, every once in a while, something like that with nothing to do with her directly or even lyrically, it'll just hit something and I lose it. Not in a bad way, but it's like…

It's a human way, I guess.
Yeah, it's like something pops and a lot of things are drained out. And then I'm cool. Then I'm alright. I'll drink a Red Bull.

"'(What do I think of) Jesus Christ?' Sadly, no one's asked me that in a year."

Quick, the purpose of art is…?
(Turns to Ben, his sound guy) He's got some good questions, here. He's stumping me. So, the purpose of art is? That's a Ben one. Ben's a philosopher. (Turns to Ben) Wanna help me on this one, Ben? Pinch hit? The purpose of art is…?
(Ben): The advancement of man.
The advancement of man. That's good! He pops it right out. Yeah, let's go with that.

I've got a fun one. If you could erase one song from history – just go back in time and keep it from being written – what song would it be, and why?
Um, just any of those Creed songs.

Thanks for your time.
I didn't know you guys were in Texas.

Yeah, 'been in Austin forever. 22 years now. Love it.
Have you guys got to hang out with these guys (points to Paramore on HM #128 cover) at all?

A little bit, yeah, at Warped Tour.
I haven't met her, but the guys – they're so crazy. We were sitting in our dressing room. We were at this big radio festival. There's like 9 million bands and it starts at noon. Everybody gets to play, like, 5 minutes. We're doing one of those and we're sitting in our dressing room and they just walk in the dressing room, kick the door open. "What's up!?!?!" We never had even met 'em. "What are you guys doing?" They grab a chair and sit down. "Can we have a drink? Can we have a Coke?" It was like a bunch of kids. It was so funny, man.

✖

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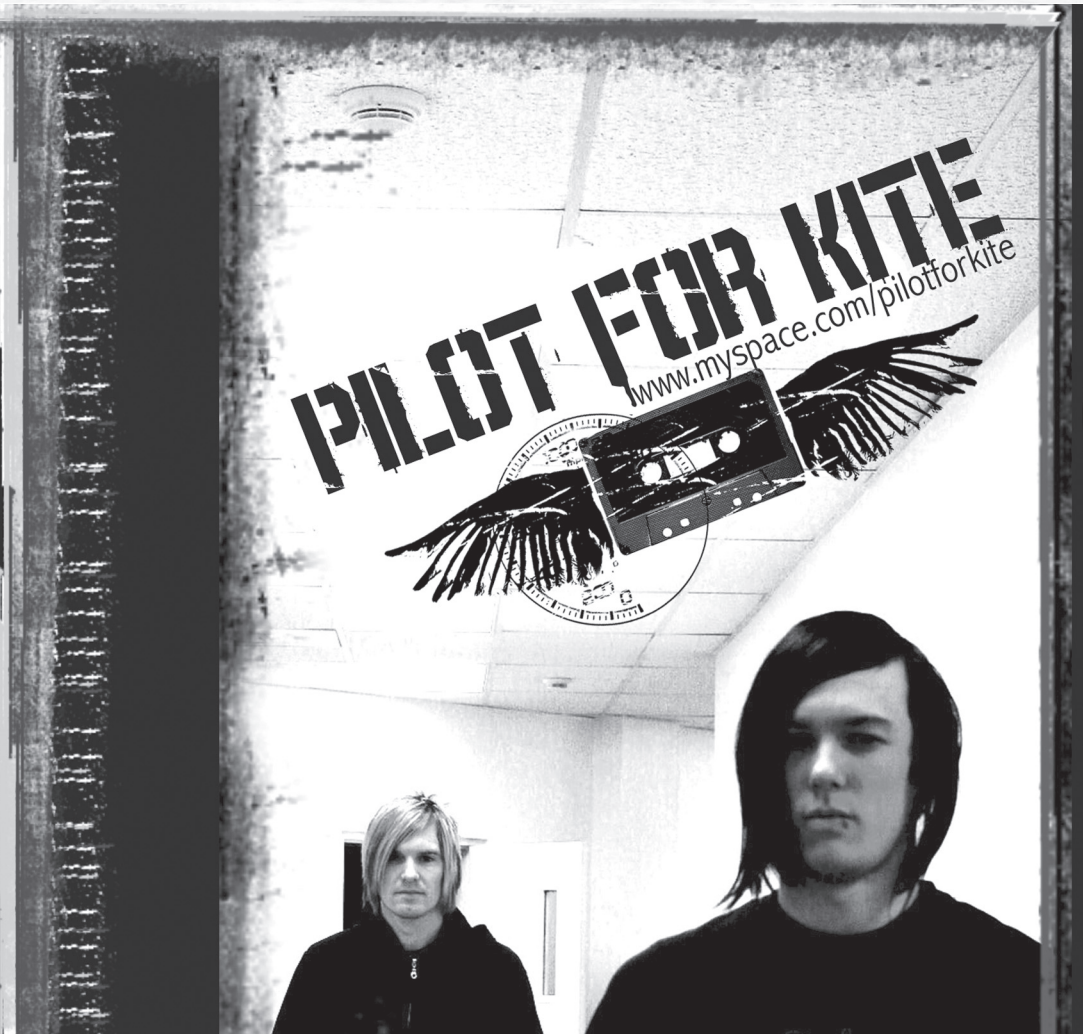

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Album reviews

55 ALBUMS 60 ENTERTAINMENT 61 BOOKS & GADGETS

PILLAR

FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME

Christian music's powers-that-be need to send Rob Beckley & Co. some cards of appreciation. Or, at the very least, some fist-pumps and shout-outs. In an industry marked by the line of artists heading for the "Exit" door in their attempts for mainstream respect, Pillar feels quite comfortable in their skin as a Christian rock band.

"I want people to know that we are a Christian band," Beckley says when discussing the new album, *For The Love Of The Game*. "We love the fact of who we are. This is what we're a part of. So don't be ashamed of Christian music."

Of course, what else would you expect from the front-and-center quartet? Pillar has made a career of being *Fireproof* on the "Frontline." And *For The Love Of The Game* is no different, centering itself around the sports analogy of going all-out for the cause in front of you – in this case, the pursuit of God.

"A couple of words that we really focused on were big and fun," Beckley explains. "And I think we captured that on the record." This is never clearer than on the title track, which features Beckley's fine tenor evoking slight nods to Incubus' Brandon Boyd. The boisterous musicality reminiscent of *Satellite*-era P.O.D. is found throughout the whole effort: chant-along choruses, impressive guitar breakdowns from Noah Henson, and hooks intended for jumping festival crowds.

The trend continues on "Turn It Up," Beckley's musical tribute to the Christian musicians who have influenced him over time. The band references the lyrical quips of 34 different artists, such as Michael W. Smith and Disciple, to form a sonic amalgam of Christian music history. "Throwdown" and "Reckless Youth" maintain the energy, although the latter is a direct rip of Skid Row's "Youth Gone Wild."

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

Game includes the requisite acoustic numbers necessary for formulaic balance, but Pillar has largely embraced this new direction and they do it well. Then again, they don't care what you think since they're only in this for the love of the game. [FLICKER] MATT CONNER

THIEVES AND LIARS

WHEN DREAMS BECOME REALITY

Thieves and Liars is a breath of fresh air. Their debut record, *When Dreams Become Reality*, is truly astounding. Bookended by 7- and 9-minute epics – although not my favorite on the record to listen to – they set an unabashed tone for the album: They don't care about radio play with these – they're making a record for the pure music and experience of the listener. Before even popping in the CD, the artwork for the record set the bar high – it's truly astounding (It's actually done by longtime HM friend Dave Quiggle who's designed some astonishing HM merchandise). The record just blazes along like a Chevy on a Texas highway, screaming Southern rock, doing it the old-fashioned way: The way the band wants. If you're looking for the 2008 version of that good ol' rock music, Thieves and Liars does not disappoint. For fans of Maylene and the Sons of Disaster. [DREAMT] DAVID STAGG

THE NEW FRONTIERS

MENDING

It's the Wallflowers sans Dylan, marked with possible nods to The Perishers, Rubyhorse and The Alternate Routes. In other words, the straightforward largely acoustic-driven music created by The New Frontiers is wholly palatable and enjoyable. The newest addition to The Militia Group (Copeland, Lovedrug), this Dallas, TX quintet is actually quite impressive. Nathan Pettijohn's cautious, unobtrusive vocal delivery feels perfect for the intended-for-everyone catalog found on *Mending*. The lyrics are slightly spiritual (for those who know to look) and overly positive (for those who don't). "Black Lung" opens things nicely and provides a solid template for those wondering what to expect from the rest of the outing. "Standing on a Line" saddles up to Ryan Adams' horse and "Who Will Give Us Love?" explains point blank that "if we learn to pray like Jesus, there is love." All in all, *Mending* solidly positions itself at the intersection of faith and artistry. [THE MILITIA GROUP] MATT CONNER

THE MYRIAD

WITH ARROWS, WITH POISE

The Myriad recently toured with the David Crowder Band, but it's hard to find much in common between these two disparate acts. Crowder, after all, is the master of enthusiastic praise music (e.g. the happier portions of Psalms); whereas The Myriad is more focused on exploring mankind's various forms of pain (e.g. the entire book of Job). Once Jeremy Edwardson's vocals kick in during album opener, "Forget What You Came For," the track – and the album's overall tone in general – takes on a distinctly Radiohead feel. And that iconic band's familiar uneasiness runs throughout this uneasy listening CD. The very next song, "Get on the Plane," includes a distinctly apoca(Radiohead)lyptic lyric; particularly when Edwardson repeats this foreboding line: "And if the sun comes up tomorrow, we'll be fine." These words suggest the sun – you know, that big orange ball that switched day to night every bright morning previously – may go AWOL. This band may not create Crowder-y Sunday morning worship music, but its songs are not entirely devoid of God's divine proximity. Heaven's angels fill "A Thousand Winters Melting," for instance, as Edwardson notes: "I feel their holy presence lift my head." But even at its most hopeful, Myriad songs are still built upon minor key keyboards and moody guitar strums, and powered by the inescapable cry in Edwardson's voice. The biggest difference between The Myriad and bands like Radiohead is that The Myriad recognizes an Invisible Sun – to paraphrase The Police – which gives its heat to everyone. [KOSMOS/KOCH] DAN MACINTOSH

SECRET AND WHISPER

GREAT WHITE WHALE

The latest Tooth & Nail act to enter the accessible metal foray is British Columbia's Secret and Whisper, or The-Artists-Formerly-Known-As-Stutterfly. Those familiar with the former will recognize echoes in the latter, but a band in this genre rises and falls on its vocalist and, to that end, Secret and Whisper are blazing their own impressive trail. "XOXOXO" is the lead single and features vocalist Charles Furney at his finest, a clear, lacing scream complements his stated tenor vocal. It's never grating, always polished, yet possesses enough grit to maintain credibility. "Attacker" does its best to imitate 30 Seconds to Mars and "Actress" highlights Furney's talent on slower, driving material. It's all enough to allow Secret and Whisper to make more noise than their namesake. [TOOTH & NAIL] MATT CONNER

NUMBER ONE GUN

THE NORTH POLE PROJECT

Emery has a great song called, "Don't Bore Us, Get to the Chorus." And I'm tempted to believe they wrote the song – and particularly its title – specifically for Number One Gun. This is because deferred melodies comprise Problem Number One with *The North Pole Project*. Invariably, these mostly indistinguishable tracks feature verses where the lead vocal ping-pongs back and forth in the mix – like one of those hi-fi test records back in the day – yet without ever settling into a logical note progression. And while this CD's stereophonic mix is solidly intact, the melodic hooks never quite kick in soon enough for my admittedly impatient appetite. Even when they do arrive, as eventually happens with "Wake Me Up," the dopamine dose does not reach my cranial pleasure center in a timely enough manner. Nevertheless, the ballad "I'll Find You" is straight forward and beautiful, and its memorable melody and fine singing make me wish more of *The North Pole Project* was just like it. The disc's title – as well as its closing track, "The Holiday" – strongly suggest a Christmas-y theme. But the end result is a scattering of half wrapped, empty boxes, beneath a sparsely decorated tree, which produce little cheer. [TOOTH & NAIL] MATT CONNER

ONCE NOTHING

FIRST CAME THE LAW

Dirty rock is swift, gritty, and just like sweet tea, only brewed in the South. But don't tell that to Once Nothing, who come from the Rust Belt capital of Pittsburgh, PA and scorch away most generic Dixie shredders with their debut album, *First Came The Law*. By taking their blue-collar heritage and a pedant for hardcore expedition, the quintet roughs up the genre by overcoming it with metallic breakdowns or leads that vouch their head bandanas. Being the new kid from out of town is never easy, but these greasy haired boys have just sealed their presence with a large steel wielded stake. [SOLID STATE] DAN FRAZIER

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Pillar *For The Love Of The Game*	03*	03
Thieves & Liars *When Dreams Become Reality*	03	04
New Frontiers *Mending*	04	04
The Myriad *With Arrows, With Poise*	04	04
Secret & Whisper *Great White Whale*	03*	03
Number One Gun *The North Pole Project*	03	02
Once Nothing *First Came The Law*	03*	04
MyChildren MyBride *Unbreakable*	03	03
Virgin Black *Requiem Fortissimo*	04	05
Memphis May Fire *S/T*	02*	03
Leeland *Opposite Way*	04	03
Burden Of A Day *Blessed Be Our Ever After*	04	03
Hawk Nelson *Hawk Nelson Is My Friend*	03	02
Gwen Stacy *The Life I Know*	03	03
Advent *Remove The Earth*	03	03
Sevenglory *Atmosphere*	04	04

MYCHILDREN MYBRIDE

UNBREAKABLE

Calling these guys metalcore is not simply a copout term for the sake of genre classification. It legitimately fits. The album's opening axes had me expecting an updated nod to the "golden era" of metal, but then the rest of the band joined the dueling guitars to kick off something much different. While the boys churn out several more finger licking riffs, there is plenty of hardcore fervor throughout this major label debut. Tough guy vocals are sometimes punctuated with gang chanting, and MCMB often prove their mastery of the low end, chugging breakdown before dialing things back up to breakneck speed. It seems it is getting harder for a band to distinguish itself on a first outing, given well-explored nature of the genre, but MyChildren MyBride to a decent job of it. With a little variety to distinguish between songs, they will be one to watch. ~~[SOLID STATE] TIM HALLILA~~

VIRGIN BLACK

REQUIEM FORTISSIMO

The second release in the epic final chapter of a great band, *Fortissimo* ratchets it up a notch, and provides beautiful, yet brutal, funeral doom. The album takes you on an emotional journey few albums can. Blending death metal vocals with their old gothic influence makes this a masterpiece that keeps revealing new levels as you listen to it, over and over again. ~~[THE END] DANIEL JESSE~~

MEMPHIS MAY FIRE

S/T

Memphis May Fire shift genre gears like a toddler who forgot his Ritalin. The transitions for their self-titled EP are swift and blunt, as if they accidentally fell down, hurt themselves and became lost... Dirty rock shreds run straight into a wall of screamo-ish choruses that are then blown up by mini-metalcore breakdowns. And somewhere amongst the ruins, guitarist/vocalist Kellen McGregor manages to calm everyone down for a moment of melodic build-up ... but never long enough. While the pieces of the whole are impressive, sometimes the ADD mentality is not. Nevertheless, the Dallas natives create an engaging energetic presence and there's never anything wrong with wanting to have too much fun. ~~[TRUSTKILL] DAN FRAZIER~~

LEELAND

OPPOSITE WAY

Leeland Mooring's rock band is known primarily for its contemporary worship songs. And while *Opposite Way* has more than its share of fine praise tunes, especially the quiet and contemplative "May Our Praise," this latest disc also sports a few standout topical tracks as well. "Let It Out Now" speaks out in support of Christian outspokenness, while the CD's title track warns against giving in to peer pressure. At times, Leeland comes off like a domestic version of England's Delirious?, especially during the particularly U2-y track (circa *All That You Can't Leave Behind*) "Let It Out Now." But Leeland also scores noticeable originality points for "Thief In The Night" – a biblical analogy most often applied to end times concerns – which is, instead, transformed into a worship work. My old pastor oftentimes spoke about the supposed ineffectiveness of Christians so heavenly minded, they're no earthly good. Leeland, thankfully, is both heavenly focused and earthly in touch. Therefore, this dynamic new disc finds the act seemingly moving in two opposite directions, yet arriving triumphantly at its intended destination. ~~[ESSENTIAL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

BURDEN OF A DAY

BLESSED BE OUR EVER AFTER

The main complaint here could be said of any number of bands in this genre: Screamo/metalcore/melodic hardcore/post-whatever … is fast becoming a been-there-done-that genre, with dozens of bands seemingly exploring much of the same well tread aural territory. It'd be easy to lump Burden of a Day in with that description, if they didn't stomp over this familiar ground with so much dang intensity. While they won't do much to shake up the music universe on this debut outing, there is enough of a palpable passion found here to hold a listener's interest from start to finish. Not sure about simultaneously screamed and sung lyrics like, "This is a labor of love for you!"… but they bring enough of an assault to warrant a pass for now. ~~[RISE] TIM HALLILA~~

HAWK NELSON

HAWK NELSON IS MY FRIEND

Older and wiser? Definitely. Better? That's up to the listener, but the guys in Hawk Nelson are doing what they can to outgrow the conventional, heart-on-sleeve approach of their early career. The band's latest, *Hawk Nelson Is My Friend*, is named after their most popular t-shirt, so you know they haven't abandoned their trade. But the marks of maturity are definitely there. Writing with new friends Richard Marx (yes, that one) and Raine Maida (Our Lady Peace), Hawk Nelson displays more grit ("Let's Dance," "One Little Miracle') and heart ("Somebody Else," "Not The Same"), giving vocalist Jason Dunn some depth to solidly express. "You Have What I Need" rawks in all the right ways and "Turn It On" carries an impressive early groove before exploding into a Sherwood-esque sunny chorus. It's frustrating, then, that the band still holds onto stale, childish riffs on "Friend Like That" and "Ancient History." It's good youth group fodder, but ultimately it keeps Hawk Nelson from fully moving forward. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] MATT CONNER~~

GWEN STACY

THE LIFE I KNOW

The first song, "The Path to Certainty," off Gwen Stacy's debut release, *The Life I Know*" – the band so named from Peter Parker's original girlfriend who was killed by the Green Goblin – also happens to be their single – and you can tell – because about 45 seconds into the song, the formerly more-true-to hardcore style song removes itself and vocalist Cole Wallace starts to sing. It was easy to pin this song down as the single, seeing as roughly 80% of the rest of the album doesn't break for a singing chorus or break. (The band makes an attempt at redeeming the sung chorus immediately after by dropping the song into a low breakdown.) There's nothing wrong with this, except for the fact that it seems highly representative of what Gwen Stacy seems to be doing: walking a line between Hawthorne Heights and Every Time I Die. If they would just commit to one side or the other, the album would improve greatly. As of now, it sounds a whole lot like other bands I've heard before. Not to say the band isn't tight or can't write a riff – it is to say that what they've written sounds like a record I've reviewed before. ~~[FERRET] DAVID STAGG~~

ADVENT

REMOVE THE EARTH

Featuring three former members (drummer/vocalist Joe Musten, guitarist Matt Harrison, and bassist Johnny "Long-Arms" Smrdel) of defunct and memorable metalcore act Beloved, the North Carolina act Advent has been awaited as the follow-up or continuation of the late band's enduring melodics and elongated tracks. Unfortunate for Beloved fans, Advent delivers neither. Once the infamous simultaneous drummer/screamer for Beloved, Musten abandoned his kit for Advent and dove headfirst to the front of the stage with hoarse grumbling growls (perhaps this transition can be accredited to Musten's short stint as a substitute singer for fellow Southern brethren stalwarts Norma Jean). Regardless of their past, the quintet ignites fist slamming harshcore metal that doesn't even have time for breakdowns and only continues to spray on the lighter fluid as their debut album, *Remove The Earth,* progresses. The flames of intense metalcore have recently dwindled over time due to a stronger presence of melodic relief choruses (see: Underoath, Atreyu, Thrice), and if Musten's crew feels like their past incarnation contributed to the ambers, consider Advent a bonfire. Yet after numerous tracks of relentless onslaught leave you deaf and numb, you'll remember why bands have easily evolved to feature more dynamic structures and tones: to fight stagnation. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAN FRAZIER~~

SEVENGLORY

ATMOSPHERE

Sevenglory is good. Really good. Let me just get that out there since I was ready to pass them off as "one of those bands" whose name is a bit too Christian to garner any artistic merit. *Atmosphere* oozes creativity, possesses solid to excellent musicianship, and features tight choruses and memorable songs one right after the other. "Just Me" is acoustic bliss and the title track builds to perfection. Consider me impressed and, even better, a fan. ~~[7SPIN MUSIC] MATT CONNER~~

THE AFTERS

NEVER GOING BACK TO OK

The Afters' sophomore effort is a bright, hopeful, melodic burst of sound. The ballads "Beautiful Words" and "Ocean Wide" bring to mind Keane's heart-on-sleeve emotionalism. Case in point: The group optimistically sings, "We are a story slowly unfolding," during "Beautiful Words." In contrast, "Myspace Girl," which is presumably about how bass player Brad Wigg met his future wife at an In and Out Burger in California after discovering her on Myspace, leans toward the lighter side of life. It features an '80s, The Cars-ish pop-rock feel and a humorous lyrical tone. The Afters also infuse key moments of *Never Going Back To OK* with a sense of urgency. Such intensity can be felt during "We Are The Sound," as well as on the CD's title track. "Forty-Two" expresses a similarly urgent desire to live life for all it's worth. "I want to feel alive," Josh Havens nearly begs while singing it. Despite its sonically emotional overtones, *Never Going Back To Ok* doesn't rock particularly hard. Electric guitars are merely part of its mix, and are never allowed to fully break free and scream out for joy. Instead, the overriding acoustic piano of "Summer Again" is most representative of this CD's overall sound. Lyrically, these songs explore what it means to be young, briskly alive, and boldly moving into the future. It's all about moving forward, never going back. ~~[INO/COLUMBIA] DAN MACINTOSH~~

JON FOREMAN

FALL / WINTER EPS

Jon Foreman, frontman for Switchfoot, proves to be a man for all seasons by releasing four new solo EPs: Each one seasonally named after *Winter*, *Spring*, *Summer* and *Fall*. The chillier editions, *Fall* and *Winter*, have just arrived, but we're told *Spring* and *Summer* are on their way. Although his stripped down, acoustic arrangements do not cause the same excited buzz as do regular, electric guitar-powered Switchfoot songs, this talented wordsmith's gut level honesty remains intact – even within this new and uncluttered setting. *Fall*'s "The Cure for Pain" labors over human suffering as Foreman sings, "Water keeps on falling from my eyes." Elsewhere on *Fall*, "Equally Skilled" bluntly contrasts man's evil handiwork with Jesus' loving touch. As you might expect, there is very little instrumentation beneath Foreman's vocals. But horns, harmonica, piano, and even clarinet creep into the mix now and again, bringing welcome color. Foreman, who is always quick to bemoan his own moral shortcomings, reveals an empathetic side on "Somebody's Baby," which turns an understanding eye toward a homeless woman. "She's somebody's baby girl," he reminds us lest we forget. For an example of Foreman's familiar introspection, look no further than *Winter*'s "Snow," where he pleads with God to wash him white as snow and create a clean heart. Switchfoot CDs oftentimes make listeners want to stomp and celebrate their hearty agreement with the band, but this solo music demands hearers sit down, shut up, and listen, instead. After all, there's a season for everything. ~~[CREDENTIAL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

IVORYLINE

THERE CAME A LION

Tune number one is "Day's End" and it kicks things off with a call to end complacency. Ivoryline implores its listeners to cry out to God with urgency, "He will deliver, failure is beneath Him." Melodic, frenetic, like Anberlin on caffeine. In a world of average bands Ivoryline is well above average. Lead vocals, harmonies, instrumentation, production, songwriting, all above average. "Be Still and Breathe" is anything but still. The drums and bass get a workout and the vocals deliver with tons of passion. The CD is filled with strong messages to friends, girlfriends and hangers on. In the pre-chorus of "And the Truth" you get the clever lyric: "I hope that all of the pride that you've felt will melt away with this pre-chorus." Again, above average. On this excellent eleven-track offering you have to get to number ten to get a mid-tempo tune. "The Last Word" expresses the earnest lament, "if only this song could capture the hope we are seeking." The song builds to a passionate, cinematic drive. Wow! First class stuff. With countless guitar tracks noodling around in echo caverns, the result is a constant wall of sound. Ivoryline is rising above the pack. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] PAUL Q-PEK~~

NEAL MORSE

? LIVE

The *Question Mark* album, or *?* was one of Neal's best works to date. When fans learned he later recorded the entire album live in Germany for release on CD fans were drooling. When it was also announced that the talented musicians that play on his albums and tour with him in the States were not going to be on it, fans were not thrilled. Mainly because monster drummer Mike Portnoy of Dream Theater fame and Neal's amazing acrobatic bass man Randy George have been a part of everything good Neal has ever recorded as a solo artist. Fear not, however, because the *? Live* album is out and it blows away any and all expectations with a spectacular performance by a band of unknowns filling those big shoes. In fact, it's Neal's best live recording and well worth the price of admission. The second disc is from the same show and features mostly tracks from the *One* album. Even if live records are not your thing, this one really captures an energy that is different from the studio version and the quality of the recording is stellar. All in all this is a must for Neal fans and for almost any fan of prog rock. ~~[RADIANT] DR. TONY SHORE~~

HOLY BLOOD

THE PATRIOT

Hailing from Ukraine, Holy Blood combines traditional folk music with the speed and heaviness of death and black metal. The frequent use of instruments not often found in hard music, such as the flute and keyboards, along with several different vocal styles results in a full and distinctive sound that the band pulls off rather well. Compared to their first two albums, *The Patriot* is slightly heavier and has a stronger Viking metal influence a la Slechtvalk. The Patriot shows that Holy Blood is well accomplished at what they do; however, the album is relatively short and lacks any standout tracks like those found on their last release, *Waves Are Dancing*. Still, this is a solid album that provides a unique listening experience. ~~[BOMBWORKS] CHRIS BECK~~

SEVENTY SEVENS

99

This Seventy Sevens live CD mixes a little solo Mike Roe music with familiar band tunes. And thankfully, Roe once again uses this recorded performance to show off his electric guitar prowess and high pop music IQ. For instance, the band merges The Smithereens' "Blood And Roses" with the old Seventy Sevens' tune, "Pearls Before Swine," to nice effect. The set also includes "Snowblind," one of Seventy Sevens' better hard rockers. "The Boat Ashore" and "The Stellazine Prophecy" are both Roe solo works, and "The Stellazine Prophecy" is particularly pleasurable as it brings out the rarely expressed funky side of Roe's musical personality. Nothing's better than a great band on a good night, and *99* finds Mike Roe and the boys at their very best. ~~[LO-FIDELITY] DAN MACINTOSH~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
The Afters *Never Going Back To OK*	04	03
Jon Foreman *Fall / Winter EPs*	04	04
Ivoryline *There Came A Lion*	04	04
Neal Morse *? Live*	03	04
Holy Blood *The Pátriot*	03	03
Seventy Sevens *99*	03*	04
Ultimatum *Into The Pit*	03*	03
Amaran's Plight *Voice In The Light*	03*	04
Seabird *'Til We See The Shore*	04	04
Stellar Kart *Expect The Impossible*	03	03
Tiles *Fly Paper*	03	02*
Fireflight *Unbreakable*	03	03*
Children 18:3 *S/T*	03*	03
New World Son *Salvation Station*	04	03

ULTIMATUM
INTO THE PIT

As a survivor of the 80's to 90's Christian thrash era (although hopefully not the last) and an old school "metal as missions" proponent, Ultimatum's new full length *Into the Pit* has been highly anticipated. Comparisons to Exodus and older Metal Church are come by honestly, but the new album is worlds beyond Ultimatum's previous efforts, as the lucky few who purchased last year's "teaser" EP can attest. Singer Scott Waters' razor-tongued shrieks stick out in a world of hardcore screaming and death metal growls, but might best be described as a cross between Roger Martinez (thus his stint with Once Dead) and Accept's Udo. The album is full of some heavy riffing, with a sprinkling of fiery axework and memorable tunes, in spite of the formula tasting stale at a couple turns. Still, a giant step forward for these thrashers; well worth the price of admission. [RETROACTIVE] CHRIS GATTO

AMARAN'S PLIGHT
VOICE IN THE LIGHT

This is a fantastic new prog rock/metal release produced by Gary Wehrkamp of Shadow Gallery. The band Amaran's Plight is DC Cooper on vocals, Gary Wehrkamp on guitars, keys, Nick D'Virgilio (Spock's Beard) on drums and Kurt Barabas (Under the Sun) on bass. Musically, this is top quality stuff, right up there with Neal Morse and Shadow Gallery. There is a good mix of hard and lighter stuff here, mostly melody driven, but with refined instrumental bursts typical of the genre. The story was written by John W. Crawford (Christian author and lyricist), and he helped DC and Gary with production as well. The story—based on a book with the same name by Crawford—is about how a near death experience changes a young man's life and how a message he receives at the time is dealt with throughout the remainder of his life. When he is diagnosed with cancer at a young age his beliefs are challenged further, but eventually, his conclusions about the "message in the light" bring him to saving faith and peace. Very deep and very thought provoking for believers and non-believers alike. This has got to be DC's best vocal performance to date – simply sublime. While one can't help but compare this to Shadow Gallery, fans of progressive metal and rock of any kind will really enjoy this. [PROGROCK] JONATHAN SWANK

SEABIRD
'TIL WE SEE THE SHORE

One of the easiest questions a music fan might answer in 2008 will be to prove why Seabird's debut is one of the year's best. Simply put, there's proof to be found in every song. From beginning to end, *'Til We See The Shore* is a fantastic piano-rock album. Need specific examples? Try the swirling piano bridge of "Jargon." Or how about the melodic, infectious Fray-like "Sometimes." Better yet, try the absolutely startling title track that fittingly closes the album that forces the listener to hit "play" all over again. Led by keyboardist/vocalist Aaron Morgan who seemingly studied under Sleeping at Last's Ryan O'Neal, the music is equal parts modern piano rock movement (Jon McLaughlin, The Fray) and Brit-pop (Keane, Starsailor). The combination is enough to give Credential Records a flagship band that will certainly lead the way forward. [CREDENTIAL] MATT CONNER

STELLAR KART
EXPECT THE IMPOSSIBLE

I recently watched *First Love*, a DVD that reunited some of Jesus Music's original artists, such as Randy Stonehill and Love Song. Watching it reminded me how these pioneering performers were never ashamed to tell audiences Jesus loves them, and perhaps this is why I find the track "Jesus Loves You," off of Stellar Kart's new *Expect the Impossible*, so refreshingly heartening. Has Christian music become too hip and sophisticated to share the gospel's simple – yet profound – truth? If so, Stellar Kart didn't get that ugly memo. Although the band writes and plays pop-punk songs, a style unimagined back during the hippy-centric Jesus Movement, its lyrical message is beautifully similar to many of the best songs from those early days. In fact, the opening track, "Innocent," longs for more innocent life, in a world where young people are too often worldly wise beyond their years. Musically, *Expect the Impossible* is far more pop than it is punk, even though "The Right One" nicely mirrors Green Day with its chanted vocal section. But then again, the opener, "Innocent," might make you think of Def Leppard-meets-Pat Benatar and create more of an '80s flashback. Bringing back fond '80s memories is all very nice, but Stellar Kart's sincere enthusiasm for sharing God's love – without an ounce of pretense – is its best retro characteristic of all. [WORD] DAN MACINTOSH

TILES
FLY PAPER

The Fly Paper Rush. Detroit neo-prog outfit Tiles must be doing something right … they have just released their 5th album, entitled *Fly Paper*, produced by Terry Brown who has worked the likes of Rush and Fates Warning. He's an amazing producer who helmed all of Rush's best, including *Moving Pictures* and *Signals*, which is where Tiles comes in. From the opening riffs of "Hide in My Shadow" to the closing track, "Hide & Seek," you can hear the Rush influence. Alex Lifeson of Rush even guests on lead guitar on the album's best track, the driving and melodic "Sacred and Mundane." It seems they mined the Canadian musician well for a bevy of amazing guest performers, including Kim Mitchell (anyone remember "Go For A Soda?") and Alannah Myles. The vocals on every chorus are layered and recorded well. Unfortunately, the lead vocal on the verses is a bit weak in spots and the lyrics are not always cohesive. This is a good record with a lot of great guitar work and amazing production, but it does not quite hit the bar set by other neo prog greats like Neal Morse or Dream Theater. [INSIDEOUT/SPV] JONATHAN SWANK

FIREFLIGHT
UNBREAKABLE

As if the late 90s South did not produce enough ambiguously-faith based formulaic rock bands (remember Creed or Twelve Stones anyone?), Orlando's Fireflight continues in the same vein with epical, power-hitting hard rock – except these kids just might be able to break off into their own unique branch and become the un-ironic real McCoy with their sophomore release *Unbreakable*. Armed with a sick moniker and the piercing perfect-pitch vocals of Dawn Richardson, the songs are quick to pick up soaring choruses introduced by chugging riffs. Bound to be plagued with comparisons of other double x-chromosome fronted bands; Fireflight delivers the fierceness of Flyleaf minus the screams and the emotiveness of Evanescence sans the goth undertones. The opening title track is destined to be a generic hit, but if anyone is smart enough to listen past the first song will discover that deeper tracks such as "So Help Me God" prove to be far superior with the emotional sincerity and moving affection of a despairing prayer. And yes, they even sometimes include the token acoustic guitar intro for their pseudo-ballads, but let's just pretend that they don't. [FLICKER] DAN FRAZIER

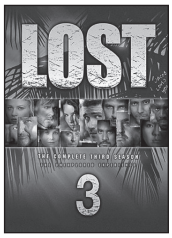
CHILDREN 18:3
S/T

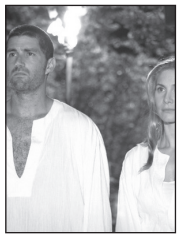
This glamrock sibling trio has crafted an energetic self-titled debut featuring a strong-voiced guy, a big-throated girl, muscular drumming, and a No-Doubt-meets-Squad-5-0 sound. Nevertheless, there's something missing here, whether it's a lack of snarling lead guitar lines to complement the chugging rhythm guitar or basslines that don't match the intensity of the drums. The main concern here is that the band's ambition hampers, not helps, their overall sound. While "You Know We're All So Fond of Dying," "Homemade Valentine," and "Time And Wasted Bullets" are solid tracks, Children 18:3 should first construct a worthy space-faring vessel if they're going to shoot for the stars. [TOOTH & NAIL] ADAM P. NEWTON

NEW WORLD SON
SALVATION STATION

The spiritual soul/funk of Newworldson dishes gospel flavors with sides of big band, reggae and more. Still it's a niche within a niche, so not all will appreciate the stew. [INPOP] MATT CONNER

Entertainment reviews
DVDS, BOOKS & GADGETS



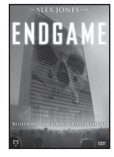


01 LOST: SEASON 3
BUENA VISTA

Is the island hell ... or some sort of purgatory existence? This and other mysterious theories are openly questioned in this one-surprise-turn-after-another season. Like any good television series these days, having all 23 episodes at your disposal makes for an exciting case of obsessive compulsive behavior that can be satisfied by jumping to the next episode without having to wait seven days. You can buy a book nowadays called, *What Can Be Found in LOST?: Insights on God and the Meaning of Life from the Popular TV Series* (by John Ankerberg and Dillon Burroughs), which explains biblical mysteries that are touched on inside this popular series. Don't laugh! You can also find *The Gospel According to Tony Soprano: An Unauthorized Look Into the Soul of TV's Top Mob Boss and His Family*; *The Gospel According to the Simpsons*; and other such books that examine the spiritual lessons intertwined within good (or bad, depending upon your tastes) stories that are being told. Narratives, by their very nature, operate within a framework or an imagined universe, which is guided by principles and theories of how things work – a "god principle," as it were. The oft-times morbid and karmic threads that seem to follow each of the *Lost* characters is fascinating and, for millions, entertaining. Subtle (and fun) hints, like "God loves you as He loves Jacob," are dropped like the many literary classic cameos throughout this season. The occasional episode commentary and the bonus documentaries remain coy yet still reveal much behind the island's mysteries. The bloopers are slightly funny, too. *Doug Van Pelt*

02 HOME OF THE BRAVE *MGM*
Hard to tell the purpose of this movie. Four soldiers come home after their tour in Iraq. We watch their lives unravel emotionally, physically, and relationally. Should we feel guilty if we support the war? What if we oppose it? A depress fest. No redeeming special features here. *Ken Washburn*

03 OSWALD'S GHOST *PARAMOUNT*
Oddly enough, this documentary is like a JFK Assasination's "Greatest Hits," as it presents just about all the different theories in a decide-for-thyself approach that is commendable. The craziest theories get presented as well as criticized; and even some of the compelling evidence that parallels the Warren Commission. *DV*

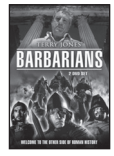


04 ENDGAME *DISINFORMATION*
I was surprised by the tone of this documentary from the predominantly left-leaning Disinformation imprint. Instead of a laughable conspiracy akin to alien abduction or government mind control (okay, there is a bit in here about fluoride in our drinking water), this presents an interesting story about the power elite. *DV*

05 FREEDOM EXPERIENCE *VERTICAL MINISTRIES*
While it doesn't have quite the drama of a Criss Angel episode, this DVD snapshot of the *Freedom Experience Tour* shows the energy of fusing bmx, motocross, skateboard and illusion into an entertaining crusade. Watching the invitation segment tugged at an emotional string that most magic shows don't, for sure. *DV*

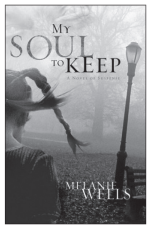
06 MIDNIGHT CLEAR *LIONSGATE*
Just like some well-meaning Christian rock or a *Hallmark Moments* holiday movie on tv, sometimes a Christmas movie can get away with certain blemishes or missing energy. Without relying on the easy-resolution, though, this one weaves together a handful of relationships (including Stephen Baldwin) that intersect on 12/24. *DV*

07 ONCE *FOX VIDEO*
There's an incredible scene in a recording studio, where an apathetic sound engineer is arrested out of his stupor by this band's brilliant music, and it serves as the climax of the movie's momentum up to that point, enveloping the viewer into its quirky romantic tale. Judging by Glen Hansard's past (*The Commitments*), this cool flick shouldn't surprise. *DV*



08 BARBARIANS *KOCH VISION*
I can think of very few people that could do a better job than Monty Python's Terry Jones in making early Roman history fascinating and compelling. The footage is breathtaking and beautiful. The commentary and implications about Christianity's history and the end of the world are an interesting discussion. *DV*

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCY (%)	90	10	10	90	100	100	20	90
OBSCENITIES	14	52		2			36	
SCENES OF GORE		8	2					
NUDITY / SEXUALITY	1	2						



My Soul To Keep
Melanie Wells – Multnomah

Well's adventurous series of Psychology professor Dylan Foster continues with many of the same characters (fellow Christian friends, a precocious and spiritually sensitive young girl, and the pasty villain, Peter Terry), wrestling with spiritual opposition and the modern day issue of child abduction. The detailed character traits (like an ex-boyfriend that shows up wearing an "I'm Big in Japan" t-shirt) makes following the story pretty fun and humorous, balancing out the dark subject matter well. By following the successful formula she crafted in *When The Day Of Evil Comes* and *The Soul Hunter*, where she neither forces the faith of the characters into the story nor writes in a predictable fashion, Wells can keep dreaming up bad luck for her Dylan Foster character to stumble into and I'll want to keep reading. *Doug Van Pelt*

All The Clever Words On Pages
Paul Harrison – 48HrBooks.com

This book was spawned by a series of email conversations the author had with mewithoutYou frontman Aaron Weiss. Two such emails adorn the back of the book. The first is Harrison reaching out for help in the midst of struggling with the idea of suicide. The second is the singer's reply, reaching out in compassion, empathy, and a practical "I will literally help you" love that's compelling. This unfolding drama alone makes for a good read. Then the insight and description of perhaps the post-hardcore scene's most charismatic and engaging artist is another great benefit from this book. Any intelligent inspection of Weiss' lyrics and occasional missives will turn into a challenging and in-depth discussion of Christianity's core teachings. In addition to those, the author chronicles a gut-honest and un-flinching journey from faith to agnosticism to revival and, in the conclusion of this book (sadly), atheism. Written with prominent parts first-person and anecdotal journaling, often times pausing to write about writing this very book, it nevertheless chronicles an enjoyable, disappointing, contemporary and spiritual trek. *DVP*

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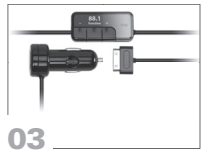
03

Gadgets
Griffin, Griffin, & more Griffin

(01) Griffin's latest armband for the iPod, the **Streamline** ($29), improves on this necessary accessory. Griffin's earlier Tempo improved on the industry standard setting Action Jacket by DLO by offering a full plastic covering for the face of the iPod, a grabber for the dangling headphone cords, and a softer material. The Streamline is tighter fitting for for the thinner iPod classic; they nixed the orange headphone clip, the strap is not as soft, but still more comfortable than the AJ. The biggest improvement? The velcro straps are easier to maneuver. (02) Griffin's **TuneBuds** ($19) are great little earbuds that fit comfortably in the ear, don't fall out easy, and deliver a nice, full and booming sound. Their latest models come in cool metallic colors and complete with different size "buds" to custom fit your ear canal space. (03) The **iTrip Auto Smartscan** ($79), furthers Griffin's development in this area with the ability to automatically scan the FM dial for the weakest (unused) frequency with which to broadcast its signal from iPod to car stereo. This makes for safer driving, as three presets are automatically dialed in and available at the push of a button. *DV*

[griffintechnology.com]

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Tenth)

This article continues our exploration of the question of why, in a nation wherein reportedly one-fourth to one-fifth of the population professes to be Bible-believing Evangelicals who hold that Scripture provides direction for "every good work" (1 Timothy 3: 16-17) (which includes the creation of art), the Church has failed miserably to produce effective, quality art.

In prior issues, we saw this failure being due largely to lack of deep knowledge of the Bible, fueled by laziness and/or poor theology resulting from a disregard of Scripture's ethical demands because of self-worship motivated by desire for feel-good experiences. This has left Evangelicals with a shallow view of God's Word resulting in the inability for them to see God, themselves, and the world (the elements of reality itself) as they really are.

Since Christian art depends for its creation upon a biblically-conditioned vision of reality realized by the artist, an incorrect view of reality leads to inferior, distorted expressions of art rightly viewed by non-Christians (and many Christians) as irrelevant. Bad theology inevitably leads to bad art.

We saw, as well, that deficient doctrines of Creation led to devalued views of matter as a medium for spiritual expression, and to denigration of the multi-dimensional aspects of Creation resulting in the production of uni-dimensional propaganda pieces.

In the last issue, we began to consider the artistic implications of deficient views of Eschatology, the doctrine of God's Purposes in shaping history within and at the end of time. Scripture teaches that God will transform culture during the advance of God's Kingdom toward the Restoration of All Things in Christ (Acts 3: 21). We saw that the current and historically novel Evangelical disbelief in the accomplishment of God's Purposes within history has led to a proliferation of Christian (actually sub-Christian) art which proffers the view that Satan is the true lord of history, who has kept God from fulfilling His Promises and Goals within time (Promises such as Habakkuk 2:14), and that mankind's only real hope is escape from the world via death or the Rapture.

The further implications of this theological aberration result not only in escapist art, but also in the idea that, since the Earth is Satan's realm, fit only to be escaped from, matter itself (the very stuff which is shaped into artistic expressions, after all) is seen as less worthy of being a conduit of spiritual content, thus denigrating the value both of Christian art and the Gospel it is intended to represent.

This idea even leads one to the logical conclusion that, since matter exists only in the realm where Satan's kingdom triumphs, matter is something only to be escaped, not something to be changed to conform to God's Revealed Purposes (the true meaning of art at its base). Not only does this devalue the art produced, but it militates against the Christian production of any art at all (this is perhaps why Christian art and artists have been so little valued by the Evangelical community over the last fifty years…).

That attitude is furthered even more by the concomitant implication that, if history is Satan's, then time itself is unimportant as an arena of change; if personal, individual salvation is all that really matters (as a personal escape from the world's fate), then anything else that happens in history is ultimately empty and meaningless.

Viewpoints such as this, promulgated by works of art (or from pulpits or books) promote the poisonous idea that life in this world is, at its best, only intermittently important, rather than being an arena in which every part of life is ultimately important, the theater of God's Glory.

Bad theology, including bad eschatology, inevitably results in bad art. Next issue, God willing, we will look again at the artistic damage rendered by non-Biblical eschatology.

[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it
Chris Wighaman

MOVIES

I love movies. Americans love movies. There is something about the larger than life images and unbelievable action. Movies are appealing because they have a beginning, middle and satisfying end to a story which all occurs in 2 hours or less. Just as I'm sure you did, I saw a lot of movies in the past year. Last year alone 1.42 billion tickets were purchased at cinemas across the US. Well, since we're so movie crazy, what if I asked you to use it as an evaluative tool? Answer this question: If your relationship with God were a movie that you saw this past year, which one would it be, and why? Here are a few options to get you started. [Feel free to shoot me yours at HMChris@gmail.com]

P.S. I Love You. Grieving the loss of a long dead love. Reminders are everywhere of the wonderful things of the past, but it's gone and it only makes you sad in the present.

Alvin and the The Chipmunks Movie. Cute, shallow and ultimately pointless. A nice diversion, but nothing life changing. Something that reminds you of your childhood, but lacks substance.

300. A life changing battle where the losses are real and the rewards are too.

Fantastic Four 2, ***Spider-man 3***, or ***Ghost Rider***. It holds the super powered hope of changing the world, but ultimately you're feeling empty and weak.

Live Free or Die Hard. Tons of explosions, running and action. It's almost too much for an aging star.

National Treasure 2. Searching, seeking and ultimately finding the treasure of truth.

The Bourne Ultimatum. A search for your identity, you're not sure how you got to where you are and not sure how to get to where you want to go.

I Am Legend. Edge of your seat suspense; knowing you shouldn't enter the darkness, but sometimes find yourself there anyway.

Pirates of the Caribbean [The trilogy]. A promising beginning that settles in and becomes a monotonous mishmash of a story that feels like it could be exciting and life changing, but is certainly all show and mostly incomprehensible.

Zodiac. A mystery, still not solved, and probably will never be.

Wild Hogs. Something you heard a lot about, but when you actually experienced it, felt like you were missing something.

Transformers: the Movie. The transformation you are undergoing is in process and you're excited to see if you end up a VW Bug or a Dodge Charger.

Next. Can't wait to see what's next so much that you wish you could see just a few moments into the future.

Devotions with Greg Tucker

Tight Pants

Recently my production company filmed a concert in Southern California, and most readers would know the headliner if I mentioned his name. The room was packed, and you could tell by the Christian metal t-shirts and HM magazines floating through the crowd that these people had come to party and worship.

The event went off without a hitch, and our three high-definition cameras caught every nuance of the lead singer, his band, even the crowd. But it was that last footage I found intriguing. Mostly women lined the front of the standing-room-only venue, and on film it was obvious many of them were distracted. Troubled, even. After the gig I approached several for an explanation. Their answer? The artist wore "very, very, VERY tight pants."

Turns out Mr. Christian Singer's britches were as high-def as our cameras, and nothing was left to the imagination for the first five rows. One 20-something girl I spoke with summarized her thoughts this way: "I'm sure he was singing about Christ, because I've heard his CD, but I definitely had a hard time thinking about Christ while he was in front of me."

This confused-by-sight phenomenon isn't new. On September 26, 1960, Senator John Kennedy and Vice President Richard Nixon participated in our nation's first-ever televised presidential debate. Across the board, people who listened on the radio declared Nixon victorious because they felt his answers had real substance. But the 70 million who watched on television perceived Kennedy to be the winner by a very large margin. It seems people were impacted more by what they saw than what they heard.

God bless the songwriters of the world, those talented wordsmiths who can sneak away to coin a term, rhyme a phrase, or crystallize some deep theological truth in well-penned lyrics. Metal-loving believers need people like you to encourage us and show us the way. You give us substance! But be advised that what you look like in front of people is as important as how your songs sound on an iPod. Wearing drastic makeup, chains, and plugs onstage can be smart marketing to help an artist connect with other metalheads in the audience, but throwing on clothes that send another message can give the impression you're marketing something else.

In 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 Paul shares the secret to getting the Message across consistently. He advises, "Let them see the Spirit's power in us." It seems that in Christian ministry, like film production, success comes when the video is in sync with the audio.

[Greg Tucker lives in your computer at HopeCCA.com]

PICK OF THE LITTER

Tom From Red
This band has really grown and improved over the years. The *Heart Beat* EP showcases some strong songs; big, melodic hooks; and a lot of spunk, energy, and attitude. Recorded in early 2007 at Sound Mine Studios, "The EP turned out amazing and we really found a studio that could capture the feeling of the band," says bassist Nate Jones. "We couldn't be happier with the outcome!" The band have added new management and have a hi-def music video of their song "Heart Beat" coming out this month. The York, Pennsylvania quarter is rounded out with Brett Shoffner on drums; Mike Landis on guitar/keys and lead vocals; and Matt Diehl on guitar. (Doug Van Pelt)
tornfromred.com

Ruetschle
Super talented vocals. Some of the songs conjure up mono loveliness from the Kinks, Beach Boys or even Herman's Hermits. (DV)
myspace.com/ruetschle

Before There Was Rosalyn
Hard and furious, with lots of dynamic fills. Soft introductions lull you in only to hack away with brutal screaming and crashing guitars. (DV)
myspace.com/beforetherewasrosalyn

Star Industry
It's hard not to love the gothic, low and doomy techno tunes of this Belgium band (that's right). Well produced, clean, and driving rock. (DV)
starindustry.be

Batzz In The Belfry
Beautiful, dynamic, gothic darkwave. Utilizes violin and keyboards to lift the listener ... between pummellings. Not extreme, like Virgin Black; but doomy. Some tunes, like "Fade To Grey" or the Christmas hymn, "O Holy Night," have an almost 80s Brit pop / New Wave sheen to them. (DV)
batzz.com

Alakrity
Notice how some pop punk is annoying, but you later discover that its hooks have dug deep inside your psyche? Alakrity might be another one of those bands you love to hate ... or vice-versa. (DV)
alakrityonline.com

Civilian
Dirty, raw, intense metalcore/hardcore. Somewhat spastic, sonically sometimes as raw as a fresh scab or ripping off a sticky Band-Aid. (DV)
myspace.com/civiliannoise

Andy Melvin
This Austin artist has produced a little gem here with *The Human Engine Waits*. Great, fresh, and new (albeit somewhat typical) worship music. Very clean, melodic and sing-along-able. A straining engine sputters and gasps to start the album, acting as a cool but crude metaphor to just surrender to God. Nice packaging, too. (DV)
myspace.com/andymelvinmusic

Identity
Well done album called *The Missing Piece*. Imagine a cross between the urgency of Red Jumpsuit Apparatus and the sometimes dark pop of Skillet. (DV)
identityband.com

Lucy
Easy to like heavy and hard metal. Very fast and frenetic. At times the guitar players and drummer give the listener mathematical-like riffage and rhythms to mess with the head. (DV)
myspace.com/lucy777

ilia
Angular, chunky and metallic riffs from this all-girl band seem to fuse the contemplative scream/sing melodic rock of Flyleaf with the stop and start a lot power of early Chevelle. The vocals of Alyssa Duncan sound almost like a back alley con artist that gets your defenses down with feigned vulnerability and then she plunges a knife in your gut. (DV)
myspace.com/iliamusic

Allatusadeo
Excellent, screaming, intense noise and destructive metal. Inventive guitar noises and blips. Overall, probably my favorite "pick" this issue. (DV)
myspace.com/allatusadeo

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I do not understand what I do.
For what I want to do I do not do,
but what I hate I do.
[Romans 7:15]